SEPTEMBER 2012: IMAGES & ICONS

FEMINIST ICONS OF NORDIC NOIR

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ALBUM COVER

STEVE JOBS AND THE ICONIC APPLE

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE WESTERN

SELF-IMAGE AND THE MEDIA

ICONS IN THE HOOD
Welcome to new readers just starting out on your media and film journey – and welcome back to those of you returning to A2 and other Level 3 courses.

This first issue of the year is on Images and Icons – traditionally the first port of call in Media Studies. You’ll already be well practised in reading and analysing still and moving images, but what’s this slippery term icon? And what does iconography mean in the context of Media Studies? You’ll know the word from the graphic symbols on your desktop, but that’s only one meaning. At its simplest, it’s described as: ‘An image; a representation’ or ‘a symbol resembling the thing it represents’. Most definitions remark on the term’s derivation from religious imagery; ‘the representation or picture of a sacred or sanctified Christian personage, traditionally used and venerated in the Eastern Church’ (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/icon). Hence, the Oxford English Dictionary refers to ‘a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration’, while the Urban Dictionary defines an icon as ‘a legend, role-model or superstar’.

Of course, it’s more complicated than that. It’s often easier to define the term by listing those we all acknowledge as icons of popular culture: for example James Dean, Monroe and Garbo on-screen; Elvis, Judy Garland, the Beatles in music; Madonna or Gaga as superstars who have successfully recycled the iconic properties of other, older icons to create their own brand image … Yet none of these icons appears in this issue! Instead we feature cultural icons old and new, from Brenda Hamlet’s analysis of the changing nature of James Bond, and the self-aware image construction of George Clooney, to ‘wannabes’ such as Lana del Rey, iconoclasts such as the Sex Pistols, or newer fictional archetypes such as the heroines of Scandinavian crime drama. And we consider how that grumpy emo minx Emily the Strange has emerged from a skateboarding ad to a multi-million dollar brand which has now become a global icon.

But what about iconography – the symbolic visual elements of a text which resonate beyond their literal meaning, and come to be associated forever with the conventions of their genre? Look out for James Rose’s analysis of the opening sequence of Once Upon a Time in the West, which embodies the essence of the Western, or the use of myth and horror icons in The Cabin in the Woods. More controversially, Pete Turner analyses the iconic elements associated with the chav in media representations of young people, while Steph Hendry discusses the role of advertising iconography and commodification in the ways in which we construct our own identities. And finally, the seamless blending of literal, cultural and technological iconography in the work and life of the late Steve Jobs and Apple Inc. Lots to get you started.

We’ll be publishing a double web supplement with our December issue, and there’s still some room for articles on your own personal favourite icons or preferred iconography – just email your contributions to jenny@englishandmedia.co.uk and you could find yourself published online!

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this issue.
contents

Front Page News

Self-image and the media – selling us our selves  How do the media influence the ways we see ourselves, and our construction of our own identities, particularly in this era of social networks and media saturation? Steph Hendry explores the issues.

Icons in the hood – how working-class youths became chavs  Is this the beginning of the end for the word ‘chav’? Pete Turner looks at recent representations of modern youth’s controversial icons.

Have a strange day – the iconography of Emily  Sara Mills explores how this simple image of a sulky black-haired girl has become a global icon.

How to be gorgeous – George Clooney as an icon of 21st-century Hollywood  How does an actor become an icon? Symon Quy unpicks the language of stardom and considers the changing screen persona of George Clooney.

James Bond – the special world of an extraordinary icon  How has the 007 mythology survived the test of time, and how has Bond’s representation developed to reflect social and cultural change? And what can we learn from his continuing iconic status? Brenda Hamlet investigates.

No second acts? The making of a very (post) modern icon  Ian Bland traces the transformation of Lizzy Grant to Lana del Rey, and wonders what we can learn from her iconography about the current state of the music industry.

The iconography of the album cover  Christopher Budd goes behind the scenes of creative agency The Intro Partnership to discover that album cover art is alive and well. He offers a guide to cover reading, with ten covers that changed the world.

The Battle of Algiers – an iconic drama-documentary  Nick Lacey introduces a powerful film made 46 years ago, which offers important lessons to the politicians of the 21st century.

Gloom’s Cartoon  The Eyes Have It!

What lies beneath? Lund and Salander – the feminist icons of Nordic noir  Jonathan Nunis explores the idiosyncrasies and appeals of two very contemporary icons from an area relatively under-represented in popular culture until recently – the world of Scandinavian crime drama.

You think you know the story ... icons of horror in The Cabin in the Woods  Written by the creators of Buffy and Cloverfield, you might think you know what to expect from The Cabin in the Woods. But as Sean Richardson points out, this is a movie that speaks to universal fears and mythologies.

God Save the Queen: the iconography of the Sex Pistols 35 years on, Mark Ramey investigates the iconoclastic Sex Pistols and their brief but game-changing relationship with the monarchy.

Analyze that – clarity and subtext in the cinematic images of Stanley Kubrick  Kubrick fan Will Rimmer reflects on the signature style of the controversial auteur, and identifies eight images which demonstrate the iconic power of his visual style.

The Apple and the icon  Broadcast journalism student Tara Cox explores the iconic status of Apple Inc., and the work of its distinguished co-creator, Steve Jobs.

Bullet by bullet – the iconography of the Western  Through his analysis of the opening sequence of Sergio Leone’s Once Upon a Time in the West (1968), James Rose examines its iconographical content to establish its meaning and wider relationship to the genre.
The greatest media invention of the last 60 years?

RIP Eugene Polley, inventor of one of the world’s most useful technology gadgets, who has died aged 96. So what did he invent? An early smartphone? A prototype PC? No – actually it was the Flash-Matic, the world’s first wireless TV remote control, invented way back in 1955 for Zenith TV. It was originally a green ray-gun shaped device with a red trigger, advertised as ‘absolutely harmless to humans’. But was it? Arguably the new ability to change channels on your TV without leaving your chair has given rise to generations of unhealthy couch potatoes and channel-surfers with minimal attention spans. And as for domestic harmony, who hasn’t fought bitterly over the remote control?

A missing icon – but not too late to catch a fire …

In this issue on Images and Icons, there are a few surprising omissions, particularly in the field of music: Madonna, subject of countless academic theses and debates, not to mention Elvis Presley, and the self-reinventing David Bowie. We were particularly sorry not to run a piece on the iconography surrounding Bob Marley – but delighted to see that Marley, Kevin MacDonald’s thoughtful biopic, exec produced by son Ziggy, was released on DVD on 7th August. And until 22nd October, you can still visit Messenger: The Bob Marley Exhibition, at the British Music Experience at London’s O2 Centre, Britain’s only interactive museum of popular music. It’s billed as part of Jamaica 50, celebrating 50 years of Jamaican independence, which may explain its presence in a museum dedicated to British pop music culture. MM has not visited the British Music Experience, so it’s an unknown quantity; if anyone would like to review this objectively for us for a future issue, mail jenny@englishandmedia.co.uk

Changeable weather, unstable economy – but UK advertising spend stays ‘steady’

However turbulent the global economy and the British summer, UK advertising expenditure has remained steady, according to figures from The Advertising Association and WARC (World Advertising Research Centre) which showed a 1.1% increase in ad spend in the first quarter of 2012. Expenditure is expected to improve over the year, reaching overall growth of 2.5% in 2012 to £16.8bn, with forecasts for 2013 of a further rise of 4.4% to £17.4bn.

An overview of projected advertising spend by individual media shows that internet advertising will have increased by £5.3bn this year; outdoor advertising, fuelled by the Olympics and Paralympics, will have gone up by 4.1% to £0.9bn. Radio advertising is also rising, boosted by a big increase in government advertising (the fastest-increasing category), as is cinema advertising. Ad spend on TV ads is more wobbly, but expected to bear up, with 0.3% growth during the year. The weakest link is, unsurprisingly, in press advertising, likely to fall by 5.1%, though predicted to stabilise in 2013.

And this matters … why? Boring though such stats might be, they’re a useful indicator of what advertising research suggests about trends in audience consumption patterns – after all, why spend money on buying adspace in newspapers when circulation figures are declining? So, is it good news for advertisers (if not for the press)? Tim Lefroy, Chief Executive of the Advertising Association, said:

In the face of global economic uncertainty, UK advertising holds a steady course. Evidence shows that advertising invigorates GDP growth, so a healthy ad market is good news for the whole economy, not just advertisers.

However, like all research, such findings and statistics need to be taken with a grain of salt. Take a look at Thinkbox.tv, funded by a confederation of commercial broadcasters, with a single ambition: to help advertisers get the best out of today’s TV.

(Seen the TV ad Harvey and Rabbit, and wondered what it was? Well, now you know.) Look at The Truth About Youth, at http://www.thinkbox.tv/server/show/nav.1435 This is a quantitative and qualitative research study into young people’s uses of media which concluded that:

TV is still the most impactful and memorable advertising medium by far.

Do its findings match your own experiences?

BBC 6 Music – the most social station in the world?

From this July onwards, 6 Music will be integrating social media into one flagship programme per month. In this show the playlist of one show will be entirely determined by online users through ‘tweet-Ins’, Facebook polls, and artists, bloggers and online music communities. Based on its success with Tom Robinson’s weekly show Now Playing @6 Music, multiplatform production company Somethin’ Else has been appointed by 6 Music to develop good social media practice, and extend into other BBC stations. Head of Radio Nicky Birch says:

6 Music fans love talking about the station’s playlist, so allowing them to take possession of the content is a really powerful thing.
Self-Image and the Media

Selling us our selves

How do the media influence the ways we see ourselves, and our construction of our own identities, particularly in this era of social networks and media saturation? Steph Hendry takes you on a challenging tour of some of the historical and psychoanalytic perspectives which have informed advertising and marketing, hastened the rise of individualism, and, arguably, turned our sense of self into a commodity.
‘Who are YOU?’ said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, ‘I – I hardly know, sir, just at present – at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.’ ‘What do you mean by that?’ said the Caterpillar sternly. ‘Explain yourself!’ ‘I can’t explain MYSELF, I’m afraid, sir,’ said Alice, ‘because I’m not myself, you see.’ ‘I don’t see,’ said the Caterpillar. ‘I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,’ Alice replied very politely, ‘for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.’ ‘It isn’t,’ said the Caterpillar.

Lewis Carroll: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

Who are you?

Whether we use fashion statements, hairstyles, make-up or indeed make an active decision not to do any of those things, we are all involved in constructing an image to communicate our identity. We have complex ideas about ourselves; there is a difference between the person we think we are, the person we want to be and the person we want to be seen to be. A significant influence on our ideas of self-image
An idealised image is used to sell iPod by creating the idea of a personality for the product.
is the context of the culture that surrounds us. When studying the media it soon becomes apparent that the representation of cultural values, the construction of role models and the way the media informs us about lifestyle and fashion choices have an influence on who we want to be, who we want to be seen as and, possibly, who we actually are.

**I think, therefore I am**

At one time in the not-too-distant past, our identity was seen to be firm, fixed and predetermined. How we perceived ourselves and how we presented ourselves was based on the social constructs that defined the interpersonal relationships within the groups we found ourselves in. Our identity would have been based around aspects of our lives that were constructed outside of our selves; class, religion, gender and the predetermined roles that were part of the accident of the family we were born into.

This was a time where the notion of the individual was less central than it is now is.

We were part of a number of collectives and self-image was based on the success we had at meeting the expectations that came with a predefined role based on our class group, our family, our church, our profession. As such, our identity was easily defined; men were ‘heads of the household’ and women were subject to patriarchal power; the ‘working classes’ were lower down the social ranking than factory owners or the aristocracy; and fate/God determined where in these social hierarchies we found ourselves, and where we were destined to remain. External image was simply a reflection of the individual’s internalisation of his or her social position.

**From citizen to consumer**

The idea that identity could be constructed in terms of an externalised image came in the post-industrial consumer boom of the early 20th century where there was a deliberate move to encourage people to adopt an identity that Edward Bernays (arguably the originator of modern notions of Public Relations and propaganda) said was based not on being as ‘active citizens but as passive consumers’.

This consumer boom was based on convincing people that it was no longer enough simply to buy what you needed to survive. Advertising and marketing was persuading people to consider what they wanted – a radically different way of thinking. Consumer goods were about creating and then satisfying desires; and advertising informed people about what they could, and indeed, should want.

The idea of creating wants and desires was influenced by the work of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. He argued that part of the human psyche was a need to feel the pleasure of having our desires met. Freud identified the idea of the id – the inner part of our personality that motivates behaviour based on irrational desires. Our id is the most un-evolved part of our psyche and, according to Freud, can cause anti-social behaviours if left unchecked. An uncontrolled id, in which our desires are indulged, can cause us to behave irrationally. On the other hand, a totally repressed id might create psychological imbalance or ‘maladjustment’ because our desires were not being acknowledged.

These ideas heavily influenced the way advertisers attempted to sell consumer goods. By tapping into these desires, successful advertisers identified how people felt about themselves, and offered products in ways that helped reinforce and support a positive self-image. In the early part of the 20th century, self-image was largely based around the notion of fitting in and conforming to social expectations.

**The rise of the individual**

Dominant values help shape how we see ourselves; and by the late 1960s and 1970s the notion of individualism began to take hold, reacting against what can be seen to be the more conformist values of the past. During the second half of the 20th century, people began defining themselves as individuals, and so wanted to express their ‘difference’ and ‘uniqueness’; they were empowered by being encouraged to ‘be themselves’.

Freud’s ideas about the Self seemed to imply that beneath the surface there was an ‘essential self’ – the core of who you actually are. Later thinkers began to challenge this, Lacan, for example, talks of the ‘fragmented self’; an idea that we are not one simple ‘identity’ but we have many identities. Our identities change depending on external circumstances and relationships. Lacan argues that this fragmentation leaves us feeling incomplete and we seek to complete our selves by imagining an ideal state of self (the ‘ideal-I!’).

In the late 20th century, the belief that an individual has the right to express his or her own identity, to be whoever they wanted to be, became widespread. Advertisers presented products in a way that made it seem as if through their purchase they could help audience members select and define an identity. Products were offered as something that could communicate the chosen identity to others through the creation of an image. Even a person’s car choice could ‘rebel against conformity’ and be part of the creation of a ‘unique’ self-image (see left).

**Branding and lifestyle**

The 70s and 80s saw the rise of lifestyle marketing and the importance of brands. Branding is the association of a ‘personality’ with a product. Advertisers sell the personality rather than the product, so that people will choose products that match their own self-image. The product is seen to help create and be part of that image. Lifestyle marketing works on connotations. Products are linked to certain
types of lifestyle. These lifestyles in turn are linked to a range of values, and so an individual would be drawn to products which reflect the lifestyle they have or, perhaps more frequently, those they want.

The product's function becomes less important than its value as a creator of self-image. Of course, there is an irony in this rise in individualism. The products required to create an 'individualised' identity are not only produced by large corporations but have been packaged into lifestyles which can be bought into wholesale. In this way true individualism has been overwhelmed by the desire to conform to ideas of self-image provided by large corporations.

This notion of self-image being defined by brands and products, rather than by authentic human experience, has generated some criticism. Postmodern critics see the construction of identity through media representations as being shallow, leading to a culture that values style over substance. In addition, the increasing dominance of the mass media and what Baudrillard calls 'media saturation' results in high cultural value being placed on external factors such as physical beauty and fashion sense over internal traits such as intelligence or compassion.

The influence of the media in providing the images, the products, the role models and the ideas that we use to help construct an idea of self-image and identity has been tackled widely in ideas that we use to help construct an idea of self-image, the products, the role models and the compassion.

Inception (2010), Ghost Writer (2010) and Superhero films, for example, frequently deal with the idea of the 'fragmented self' and it is no surprise that this is one of the most dominant film genres at the moment. Scott Pilgrim (2010), Kick Ass (2010) and Super (2010) all approach the idea of the construction of a self-image through an 'ideal-I' alter-ego. Dark Knight Rises (2012) deals with a hero with a fragmented identity. The Amazing Spiderman (2012) finds the hero searching for 'who he really is' and the protagonists of The Avengers (2012) are a collective of superheroes who all have to confront personal demons related to their own ideas of self-identity. Indeed, all superheroes quite literally mask their true identity by creating a new persona and image for their heroic deeds.

Who will we be?

Through the anonymity of the internet and particularly the possibilities afforded by the creation of avatars, we have more control over our public image than ever before. In 1998 Chandler observed that: "constructing a personal home page can be seen as shaping not only the materials but also (in part through manipulating the various materials) one's identity."

This was five years before the launch of MySpace, and six years before Facebook and the rise of social networking. Chandler analyses the way that self-image is communicated through the technical and artistic decisions made in creating a 'home page' (a personal website). This individualised way of interacting with the internet has now all but been replaced by social network and blog sites. Participants in the former are forced to construct their identity within the confines of the template provided. Nevertheless, despite this corporate control of what Chandler calls 'materials', social networking sites allow participants to create a public image of themselves to be consumed as a media product by others – and this is part of the appeal. Another technical development – data mining – allows corporations to create products designed to meet the needs we reveal in our personal information. Perhaps this is the natural next step in the commodification of self-image and identity – we end up selling our selves.

Steph Hendry is a Lecturer in Media Studies at Runshaw College, Lancashire. She is a Senior Examiner, freelance writer and trainer.

**References**


Icons in the Hood

How working-class youths became chavs
Is this the beginning of the end for the word ‘chav’? British rapper Plan B has criticised the label for being ‘a derogatory phrase no different to the ones concerning race or sex’. But some argue being a ‘chav’ is about attitude and behaviour, not race, sex, class or education. Pete Turner looks at recent representations of modern youth’s controversial icons.

The typical representation of contemporary young people in Britain is the iconic image of the ‘chav’. The chav has become a symbol of David Cameron’s ‘broken Britain’ and a cultural movement of young people that is easy to recognise.

Hooded, tattooed and often anonymous due to a covered face, ‘chavs’ wear tracksuits and trainers and often sport some dazzling golden jewellery, commonly referred to as ‘bling’. These are supposedly the youth of British streets; uneducated, poor but covered in labels and logos, and above all aggressive, most likely waving gun and gang signs around, hands stuffed down the front of their trousers just like Ryan Florence did behind David Cameron’s back.

However, many have criticised the label ‘chav’, and particularly its use by the mainstream media. Tom Hampson of the Fabian Society argues: it is deeply offensive to a largely voiceless group and – especially when used in normal middle-class conversation or on national TV – it betrays a deep and revealing level of class hatred.

Others have argued the use of the word is a form of age discrimination. Stamped with the ‘hoodies’ or ‘chav’ label and thought of as an unruly, disrespectful and dangerous bunch, we are simultaneously marginalised and stigmatised, turned into a blurry, menacing entity that does not reflect our lives.

Heath, 2011

Whatever your opinion of chavs, chavettes and hoodies, the representation of young people in the British media can definitely have an impact on people’s attitudes in real life. When asked about chavs, a group of school students classified them as in the habit of causing trouble, hanging round the streets, drinking and taking drugs. ‘They are’ working class, they live in council houses. Their parents don’t care, and they don’t work.

Harris, 2007

The question that must be asked is, to what extent this attitude comes from the students observing and interpreting what they see around them, and how much of it is a result of iconic representations created and perpetuated by the media? In order to answer this, we must look at some of the most iconic images of the chav that have appeared in the media, from television sketch shows to national newspapers, over the past decade.

Television’s Shameless Misfits

Little Britain, the comedy series from David Walliams and Matt Lucas, became a cultural phenomenon in 2003. Giving birth to the truly iconic Vicky Pollard with her garish pink tracksuit, endless offspring, hoofed earrings and inarticulate use of language, Matt Lucas’s portrayal of the ultimate chavette is a good place to start. This character has become a symbol of the laddette-ish teenage girls who are perceived to be mouthy, stupid, working class and often pregnant. In the sketches in which she features, she is often in trouble, either in the courts or the classroom, and her inarticulate ranting is a method of buying herself time when faced with accusations.

This stereotyping of Britain’s young women has received criticism for being simply ‘grotesque’ sketches about chavs written by public-school educated comedians like David Walliams and Matt Lucas.

The word chav is often associated with snobbery, an attitude in which the working class is looked down on. It can seem as though privileged performers are not only encouraging the audience to have a good old laugh at the characters – Vicky Pollard and Catherine Tate’s Lauren (‘Am I Bovvered?’) Cooper, for example – but also to sneer at the less well-educated and less fortunate young people in society.

Slightly more positive representations came onto television screens with Shameless in 2004 and Misfits in 2009. Frank Gallagher may not be a young hoodie, but he epitomises the ‘council’ background often presumed to go hand-in-hand with the chav.

Fuller, 2009

Frank and his family might be selfish and stupid, but they also show deep love and care for each other. Similarly there is more to Misfits’ Kelly than first meets the eye. Your first impression of Kelly might be that she is your common or garden chav who wouldn’t look out of place on Jeremy Kyle... Behind that veneer though, Kelly’s got a heart of gold and is fiercely loyal.

These examples show that British television may have changed somewhat in its attitudes to chavs. They are still just as iconic, with instantly recognisable appearances, but now audiences are starting to get a look beneath the cocky, brash exterior.

However, there are concerns that the damage has already been done, and that audiences are getting reality and fiction confused. The tabloids were quick to pick up on the stereotypical comedy chav image, particularly the figure of Vicky Pollard.

In attempting to hijack that image for its own ends, tabloid Britain is creating something more dangerous: a stereotype that dissolves the difference between fiction and reality.

The Guardian, 2005

‘Blockspoitation’ films – chavtastic or chavspoitation?

With chavs appearing in the new wave of British ‘hood’ films, there is some concern that these representations do more harm than good. Films such as Kidulthood (Menhaj Huda, 2006)
and *Adulthood* (Noel Clarke, 2008) have been accused of glamorising violence and chav culture, ‘while *The Times* has accused it of indulging middle-class voyeurism’ (Richardson, 2006).

*Noel Clarke*, the writer of both these films, defends them as being honest representations of Britain’s modern youth, and at least partially a reaction to *Richard Curtis*’s whitewashed view of contemporary London in films like *Notting Hill*. The youths in these films may look and sound ‘real’ with their iconic ‘chavvy’ representations, but they are also a cause for concern for many members of society with their promiscuous sex, drug taking and violent behaviour.

**The dehumanisation of the working class?**

It has been argued that films and media like this indicate that:

> the working class itself has been dehumanised – now to be feared and simultaneously served up as entertainment

*Cruddas, quoted in Harris, 2006*

The recent sub-genre of ‘hoodie horror’ films attest to this; titles such as *Eden Lake* (James Watkins, 2008) and particularly *F* (Johannes Roberts, 2010) are scaring the pants off cinema goers with their portrayals of hooded youth who torture and terrorise older, civilised members of society. Though the kids in *Eden Lake* are recognisably ‘chavvy’ and undeniably vicious, it is the animalistic and faceless, hooded ‘creatures’ of *F* that really make for disturbing icons of youth gone wild. They are totally dehumanised; nothing more than nightmarish faceless monsters that move and attack like feral beasts.
On the other hand, two more recent films have shown the council estate youth in a slightly more positive light. Fish Tank (Andrea Arnold, 2009) and Attack the Block, left (Joe Cornish, 2011) feature protagonists who may look and sound like stereotypical chavs, but who are revealed to be creative, loyal, fiercely independent and resourceful young people who are a product of their environment. These films use unknowns in their casting both to aid their sense of realism and also to create truly iconic representations of British youth. Fish Tank’s chavette on a council estate becomes an incredibly sympathetic character, as does Attack the Block’s group of muggers who have to fend off an alien invasion on their own tower block. If you want to see films that challenge the stereotype while also creating iconic characters, these two make interesting case studies.

British hip hop and grime – chavvin’ it large?

As with so many other youth movements – from mods to rockers, hippies and emos – popular music has undoubtedly had a significant role to play in creating and perpetuating the iconic image of the chav. British artists such as N-Dubz have been referred to as chavs; Dappy in particular, with his stringy hat and controversial brushes with the law, conforms to the typical idea of the aggressive, rude and almost comical image of the chav.

Most recently, Plan B’s music video for Ill Manors contentiously uses footage from the London riots of summer 2011, and appears to celebrate the stereotypes that the media perpetuate about council estate youths. Both lyrics and video take pot-shots at politicians, and specifically David Cameron’s rhetoric about ‘hugging a hoodie’ and Broken Britain. It is a visceral, rage-filled, arguably hypocritical, difficult and challenging piece of media that has a visceral, rage-filled, arguably hypocritical, ‘youth crime has always been around, we just hear about it more now’ (Heath, 2011).

What all this current interest in the iconic chav indicates is an interesting polarisation in attitude towards the youthful members of society’s underclass. One writer suggests ‘the C-word actually denotes the mind-boggling revival of privileged people revelling in looking down their noses at the white working class’ (Harris, 2006) as exemplified by the likes of Little Britain’s privileged writers and viewers. But what we must also not forget is that: we’re intrigued by them, their motivations and their antics. This is why reality TV featuring chavs succeeds: just look at The Jeremy Kyle Show.

I predict a riot – chavs hit the headlines

The word chav may have been in decline in mainstream media since December 2004, when stories about chavs reached a peak: 114 were published in that month alone (Smith, 2005). But the press representations of young people are still overwhelmingly negative. Recently 71% of articles from a range of tabloid, broadsheet and local papers involving young people were negative in tone, and a third were crime-oriented.

It’s not surprising then that Plan B and others are concerned about stereotypes becoming self-fulfilling prophecies: Here, then, is a modern folk devil maligned just about everywhere, from schoolyards to the offices of upscale newspapers

But what really brought the chav back into the headlines were the 2011 riots. Hooded youths running wild in cities across the country were displayed endlessly on the nightly news and all over the newspapers with their faces covered, tracksuits and bling on show, lootting and engaged in apparently wanton destruction. The repeated figure of the Adidas-clad youth coolly strutting in front of a flaming vehicle adorned many front pages; and in many readers’ eyes this anonymous participant became an icon of the state of modern Britain. This caused some to declare that: What chav seems to me to mean is an aggressive, self-assured, unashamedly materialistic person. I don’t think ‘chavs’ are an innocent group of victims.

Some reflections

Next time you hear the word chav, or are tempted to dismiss someone else as a chav, bear in mind the Fabian Society’s caution that ‘class discrimination is an issue that can have effects as detrimental as racial or gender bias’. The media’s amplification of deviance can give the impression that youths have recently become an unruly bunch; but remember that ‘youth crime has always been around, we just hear about it a lot more now’ (Heath, 2011).

Toynbee, P: http://www.guardian.co.uk/penal/policy/britain/2005/may/12/participation.crime


Lynskey (2012): http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2012/mar/15/plan-b-ill-manors


E4 http://www.e4.com/misfits/characters/kelly.html


Lynskey (2012): http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2012/mar/15/plan-b-ill-manors


Smith (2005): http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4091478.stm

The Guardian (2005): http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/may/12/pressandpublishing.penal

Follow it up

The chav debate could run and run. By far the most authoritative and interesting study is Owen Jones’ Chavs: the Demonisation of the Working Class, which provides a powerful context for the representations of chavs in terms of a long history of class politics, moral panics and journalistic ignorance. If you’re doing Sociology, it’s definitely worth reading – and even if you’re not, some of the reviews on Amazon might whet your appetite to look further.

BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7509968.stm

Have a strange day

The Iconography of Emily
Emily the Strange is a brand developed around an illustration of a 13-year-old girl, with straight black hair, a black dress, four cats and a good line in cynical and anti-social comments: ‘Wish you weren’t here’ ‘Get Lost’ ‘Emily wants you … to go away.’

Her simple and instantly recognisable image stands for a counter-culture world of youthful rebellion, nihilism, and the rejection of mainstream values, yet in the curiously non-threatening form of a solitary young girl.

Emily saw the light … and she wasn’t impressed

In Media Studies an icon is an image that has the power to represent a complex set of ideas in an easily recognisable form.

To be an icon rather than a logo or a brand image it also needs to provoke a level of admiration, almost worship, and to embody something unchanging. Think James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, Che Guevara and Nelson Mandela. Each of these people stands for a powerful and emotional set of ideas and feelings: Monroe and her vulnerable sexuality; Dean and his youthful rebelliousness; Guevara and his revolutionary politics; Mandela and his saint-like pursuit of freedom and equality. Can Emily really stand in line with these icons? Or is she just a clever marketing tool, a brand image that has caught the imagination?

A brand identity often exists at a functional level, and our preference for, or identification with, a brand is largely rational: the brand promises quality, good looks, good value, high performance, reliability and so on. A brand becomes iconic when our identification becomes more emotional than rational, when, for example, we buy a brand to experience feelings of adventure, rebelliousness, nostalgia, or freedom. Brands like Nike and Harley-Davidson consistently market themselves on an emotional level, promising more than just quality products: they suggest that by buying into the brand, you are also buying freedom, adventure, and a little bit of the American Dream.
‘Emily doesn’t change ... she’s always strange’

Does Emily appeal on the same emotional level as icons such as James Dean and Marilyn Monroe? Part of her appeal lies in her origins. The process of becoming an icon has been described in four stages.

**Stage 1: Rumblings** where the image represents undercurrents in society: seen in Emily’s beginnings in the post-punk era of 1990s skateboarders.

**Stage 2: Explosion** where the icon breaks into the mainstream, capturing the zeitgeist or spirit of the times. This can be seen in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when she moved beyond her cult popularity as her product range was expanded and a website developed.

**Stage 3: Collective influence** where the icon influences the mainstream, generating imitations and even parodies. With books published by HarperCollins, a film coming out, and clothing and accessories widely available, Emily is currently in Stage 3. Expect to see plenty of Emily-alikes all across the media soon, hoping to imitate or trade off Emily’s success.

**Stage 4:** a true icon outlives the imitations, representing both a set of ideas and a period in time.

However, most images fail to reach iconic status, instead becoming just another outdated brand. This can happen particularly with products that began life as anti-mainstream cult products. When cult products move into the mainstream, the very things that gave them some cachet to start with – their cult, underground, or anti-mainstream quality – is rapidly lost, and the product can be rejected by those it initially appealed to.

If you once liked Emily the Strange because the brand was different and unusual, you are likely to turn against it once it is worn by anyone and everyone. So while Emily herself may not change, and may always be strange, her particular brand of strangeness may become less strange through its repeated exposure in mainstream media. The brand may be seen as ‘selling out’, losing the cult appeal which made it interesting in the first place. It’s unlikely that the Emily the Strange brand will become an icon of our age; and even more unlikely that her image will rival those of Guevara or Monroe for its power to generate an emotional response. There is, however, every chance that her image will become next-year’s out-of-fashion item, the merchandise filling secondhand stores as everyone moves onto the next big thing.
‘Emily didn’t look tired or happy. She looked like she always looked. Strange.’

Emily’s brand relies on a central image of minimalist outlines and blocked black, white and red, easy to reproduce and easy to recognise. The colour codes are not stereotypically feminine or child-like; rather they signify darkness, death, aggression, violence and so on. Her posture usually suggests boredom, sulkiness or defiance, moods reflected in her facial expressions: she scowls or glares directly at us, never smiling. Her costume is always a black dress and black tights, unadorned and unchanging, and fitting into the anti-fashion emo or gothic look.

Her props include four cats, hinting at links to the occult, and suggesting that Emily herself has cat-like qualities: intelligent, independent and anti-social. Her other key prop is a catapult: most recently associated with Dennis the Menace, linking her into the tradition of loveable villains from comics. Her style is also influenced by minimalist Japanese graphics and manga images: ‘Mai the Psychic Girl’ was one of the first Japanese manga to be translated into English and published in America in the 1980s, and Emily’s look is not dissimilar to Mai’s.

‘Emily doesn’t search to belong … she searches to be lost’

Emily’s nihilistic view certainly appeals to girls of the gothic or emo persuasion: ‘She’s very strong, distinct character and she’s about not trying to fit in,’ says Anne Hoppe, editor of HarperCollins children’s books. ‘There’s not a lot out there commercially for kids that really says to be yourself.’

While Emily may not be totally original, she does provide the latest instalment of what website TV Tropes (http://tvtropes.org) calls ‘the strange girl’. Not widespread enough to be seen as a stereotype, it is nevertheless a distinct type, recalling Wednesday Addams in The Addams Family, Lydia in Beetlejuice, Coraline, Luna Lovegood in Harry Potter, or even Lisbeth Salander in the Dragon Tattoo novels and films. As such, the ‘strange girl’ can be seen as an increasingly prevalent representation and one that seems to fill a need for a certain target audience group of young women seeking alternatives to stereotypical representations of girls.

‘Emily doesn’t make imaginary friends … she creates imaginary enemies’

Emily provides an alternative representation to the saccharine views of teenage girls often promoted in girls’ magazines and on TV. Compare the representation of teenage girls on the cover of a typical teen magazine – light, bright colours, images of smiling happy teen girls and focus on pro-social activities like finding boyfriends, managing friendships and maintaining your appearance – with Emily’s frowning stare, her oppositional stance, her pale skin and black clothes, her nocturnal existence and her dislike of people. As a role model she offers something very different to mainstream ideas of what is appropriate for teen girls. Like many gothic or emo versions of femaleness, Emily can be seen as presenting a positive, even feminist, image. She is not defined by her relationships with men; she is not a damsels in distress; she is not passive; she is not gentle.

In this respect, she offers an interesting and positive contrast to our other great emo heroine, Bella in the Twilight novels and films, who has been criticised by some for being too passive, and too defined by her romantic relationship with Edward.

Readings of Emily

However, all images are polysemic, with multiple meanings, and capable of being read in different ways. Theories of ‘audience reception’ (see Stuart Hall, Frank Parkin, David Morley) emphasise that the way the audience interprets an image is not controlled by the producers of the image. Images may offer a dominant reading, in line with what the producers intended, but can also sustain a variety of negotiated or oppositional readings.

In Japan and Taiwan, Emily the Strange has become part of the ‘visual kei’ or style of the ‘gothic Lolita’ fashion, which emphasises the ‘little girl’ femininity and cuteness of the image, rather than its empowering, androgynous and feminist aspects. Cross-cultural issues and the history of Japanese fashion have intersected with Emily the Strange to produce a version of her which is quite different to how she is read and reproduced in the US and UK. In some ways, Emily is returning to her roots, as the original designs by Rob Reger grew out of his interest in the minimalism and cuteness of Japanese graphic styles.

Some suggestions for working with Emily

For AQ&A MEST 3: Representation the analysis of a range of texts in the Emily the Strange brand, including the website (http://www.emilystrange.com), print texts (some magazine spreads are collected on the Emily the Strange website at: http://www.emilystrange.com/beware/scrapbook/index.cfm?item_id=639&section_id=29) and the DS game ‘Strangerous’ would provide an interesting starting point for a discussion of the representation of gender, specifically of teenage girls, in the media.

Representations of Emily the Strange could be compared to more mainstream representations in teen girls’ magazines, or to representations of other ‘gothic’ heroines such as Bella in the Twilight series. This would raise an interesting discussion of whether gothic and emo sub-cultures can be seen as supporting feminism or as perpetuating hegemonic views of the female as passive and subject to the male gaze. It could also generate discussions of how the media supports or exploits cult or counter-culture representations, and whether, once these become ‘monetised’ and part of big business, they can still be regarded as counter-culture.

For MEST 4, it could be useful critically to investigate how brands become icons. You could use the Emily the Strange brand, or look at the marketing behind a brand which has very successfully moved into the mainstream like Roxy or Bench clothing, or find a niche or cult product which is marketed to maintain its independent spirit. It might also be useful to look at different marketing methods used by low budget operators, particularly guerrilla marketing.

For your practical work, you could develop your own brand along the same lines as Emily the Strange. For this, a set of print or broadcast marketing materials (magazine and billboard adverts, a TV or radio advert, guerrilla marketing materials) or a promotional website with social media links could be a good starting point. Your materials would need to have a strong brand identity, representing and communicating a set of values and beliefs. Good luck – and ‘have a strange day!’

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_the_Strange

How To Be Gorgeous

George Clooney as an Icon in 21st-Century Hollywood
A star in the making

As many a woman over thirty will tell you, George Clooney (born Kentucky, 6 May 1961) first became famous as a television actor, playing a paediatrician in the hospital drama series ER in the early Nineties. He’d been a jobbing actor for a decade before, but it was as Dr Doug Ross that he first developed the heartthrob persona that he would go on to transfer so seamlessly to cinema.

Clooney’s first major Hollywood role was alongside Quentin Tarantino in the vampire-road-buddy-movie From Dusk Till Dawn (Robert Rodriguez, 1996). He followed its success with a sequence of films that cast him as a suave leading man: One Fine Day (Michael Hoffman, 1996) opposite Michelle Pfeiffer, and The Peacemaker (Mimi Leder, 1997) with Nicole Kidman.

Clooney was then picked for the lead role in Batman & Robin (Joel Schumacher, 1997). While this big-franchise blockbuster was critically panned, it was commercially successful and cemented his international profile in the film industry. It was with Out of Sight (Stephen Soderbergh, 1998), however, that ‘Gorgeous George’ first won over critics, playing opposite Jennifer Lopez and initiating a partnership with the director. Clooney and Soderbergh went on to produce the lucrative Ocean’s 11, 12, and 13 series (2001, 2004, 2007). By the late Nineties, Clooney’s star persona had become bright enough to enable him to bridge a conventional mainstream career with a more experimental approach to filmmaking.

I’m a hybrid. I succeed in both worlds. I hope that selling out on Ocean’s Eleven is not such a bad deal. The trade-off is, I get to go make something un-commercial that will probably lose money.

In 1999, in a clear attempt to resist being typecast merely as eye-candy in romances, Clooney ‘diversified’ to star in Three Kings (David O. Russell, 1999). This oddity of a film repositioned the conventions associated with heist movies to a narrative set during the Iraqi uprising following the first Gulf War. The American film critic Roger Ebert described Three Kings as a weird masterpiece, a screw-loose war picture that sends action and humour crashing head-on into each other and spinning off into political anger.

Since its release he has been drawn to scripts that are characterised by black comedy with a satirical edge or contemporary political commentaries with an uncompromisingly critical tone.

Stars as social constructions

The film theorist Richard Dyer suggests that ‘Stars are commodities produced and consumed on the strength of their meanings’ and that their images are constructions that serve ideological purposes. He goes on to argue that:

Stars are representations of persons which reinforce, legitimate or occasionally alter the prevalent preconceptions of what it is to be a human being in this society.

So George Clooney’s star persona might be read as a manifestation of the characteristics and norms of his industry, and the values, aspirations and anxieties of audiences in contemporary Western (American, capitalist) society.

Another theoretical perspective might also inform an assessment of Clooney’s present-day image. Auteur theory (auteur being French for author) suggests that certain film directors are able to infuse films with their own vision or
signature, despite the constraints of the mode of production or the collaborative processes of studio systems.

**Auteur theory** was developed by the French critic Andre Bazin in 1957 in the influential journal *Cahiers du Cinema*. Patrick Milligan’s exploration of the influence of the actor James Cagney in *The Actor as Auteur* (1980) argues that actors can be auteurs, too; that they can provide an authorial presence in a movie as persuasively as any director. Perhaps there is value in extending this notion to Clooney’s body of work. Certainly, casting George Clooney in a film is a decision that will require a producer to balance financial considerations with what the actor ‘brings to the role’ and the storyline.

**Clooney and brand identity**

Clooney’s filmography (and other work such as advertising, as exemplified by the Nespresso commercials) is characterised by a set of traits that audiences have come to expect from his movies. These traits function in a similar way to a brand – as an assurance of quality and instant means of identification for audiences. According to Wikipedia, a brand is:

- a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers.

The notion of branding can be extended to film marketing, which seeks to ensure that films find audiences and a maximum return on their investment in a global market.

**So what has ‘brand’ Clooney come to stand for?** If we look back over the body of films that have carried his name, either as actor, screenwriter or director, what can we learn about the ‘George Clooney’ brand?

- **When cast in a lead role**, with appropriate star billing, Clooney plays **strong male characters** that are instantly recognisable. He typically plays **loveable scoundrels** with redeeming qualities that result in **manifest change for the better** – in both individual terms and within the society he inhabits: think *Up in the Air* (Jason Reitman, 2009) or *The Descendants* (Alexander Payne, 2011).

- **Personal appearance.** The trademark grooming of his ‘Roman cut’ hair and costume that combines the formal attire of a well-cut suit with the relaxed self-assurance of an
open-neck white cotton Oxford shirt. Close-ups often see him smiling, crinkly-eyed with head slightly to one side, as in Out of Sight (Stephen Soderbergh, 1998) or any of the films in the Ocean’s series.

- A sense of postmodern playfulness and ironic self-deprecation. Clooney chooses scripts that allow him to spoof himself and his image, as seen in From Dusk till Dawn (Robert Rodriguez, 1996) or the Dapper Dan hair-pomade shenanigans of O Brother, Where Art Thou? (Joel Coen, 2000).

- A liberal political sensibility. From 2005 onwards, Clooney has increasingly chosen to play worthy men of conscience driven to extreme measures and actions by corrupt governments or corporations. We see this in the characterisation of Bob Barnes in Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005) and in his performance in the lead role in Michael Clayton (Tony Gilroy, 2007).

A ‘real’ persona

If we have identified above some of the dimensions of Clooney’s ‘reel’ persona, what then of his ‘real’ persona? We should be cautious here, however, and recognise that this is likely to be as much of a construction as the fictional characters of his films. Clooney seems very relaxed about much of a construction as the fictional characters however, and recognise that this is likely to be as

dimensions of Clooney’s ‘reel’ persona, what then to social concerns:

Clooney has used his star identity to campaign to help represent environmental groups. For him to be a poster-boy for the Democratic Party, not least because of his high-profile advocacy of Barack Obama’s candidacy and subsequent investiture as American President. But the actor also ‘had previous form’ in their eyes. Some Republicans were outraged when they heard Clooney speaking about the 2003 start to the Iraq war in promotional interviews about Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005).

Clooney had suggested that: “you can’t beat your enemy anymore through wars; instead you create an entire generation of people revenge-seeking. These days it only matters who’s in charge. Right now that’s us – for a while, at least. Our opponents are going to resort to car bombs and suicide attacks because they have no other way to win … I believe Donald Rumsfeld [then Secretary of Defense] thinks this is a war that can be won, but there is no such thing any more. We can’t beat anyone anymore.”

This led to accusations that he was ‘un-American’, and to a concern that his political profile would impact on his future films at the box office.

Yet Clooney seems unabashed and continues to maintain a successful relationship with important American institutions, such as The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which still uses his image on its publicity materials. He argues that:

“We’re the ones who talked about AIDS when it was just being whispered. And we talked about civil rights when it wasn’t really popular. This Academy – this group of people – gave Hattie McDaniel an Oscar in 1939 when blacks were still sitting in the backs of theaters. I’m proud to be a part of this Academy, proud to be part of this community.”

Perhaps the natural development of Clooney’s philanthropy was his appointment in January 2008 as a United Nations ‘Messenger of Peace’. Clooney sees to understand perfectly the political dimensions of his ‘reel’ and ‘real’ personas. His most recently-directed film The Ides of March (Clooney, 2011) brings these two sides of his star identity together in a comment on the dirty business of modern American politics. He believes that:

“it’s not a bad thing to hold a mirror up and look at some of the things we’re doing politically. Everybody makes moral choices that better themselves and hurt someone else. And then we look at whether the means justify the ends.”

An icon (the Greek word for image) is a religious work of art. More broadly the term is used in a wide range of contexts for an image, picture, or representation that symbolises ideas. In film industry terms, the word implies an actor of A-list status whose screen and real-life persona has come to represent or embody certain qualities. The term also carries a sense of longevity and meaningful contributions to the screen profession over time. In recent interviews, and now on entering his fifties, Clooney has recognised that he may not continue to find challenges in acting or find roles that will allow him to develop further.

Like Robert Redford before him (the founder of the Sundance Institute and Festival, whose career shares similar sensibilities), Clooney is looking for new ways to make a contribution. He has talked of changing from being an actor who directs occasionally to a director per se: “Directing is really exciting. In the end, it’s more fun to be the painter than the paint.”

It would seem that Clooney’s legacy to film is yet to be determined.

Syman Quay edits: Splice: the Journal of Contemporary Cinema, and is the author of Teaching Short Film (2007).

References

Dyer, Richard (1979): The Stars

Follow It Up

George’s black comedies

Intolerable Cruelty (Joel Coen, 2003)

Burn After Reading (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2008)

The Men Who Stare at Goats (Grant Heslov, 2009)

George’s political drama/social commentary

Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005)

Goodnight and Good Luck (George Clooney, 2005)

Michael Clayton (Tony Gilroy, 2007)

Up in the Air (Jason Reitman, 2009)

The Ides of March (George Clooney, 2011)

The Descendants (Alexander Payne, 2011)

Images courtesy of image.net
the film character of James Bond is always dependent on the actor who plays him and the time at which the film is made because Bond always lives in the contemporary time the films are made.

But what does that mean? Is there one James Bond or many variations of the same representation? And if the character transforms with each new actor and successive film, are Bond's iconic meanings always the same? If so, is it possible to 'unwrap' the character from his various forms and films?

Weiner and Whitfield, in their introduction to *James Bond in World and Popular Culture: The Films Are Not Enough* (2010), believe Daniel Craig's Bond is now a very different sort of agent to Sean Connery's debonair playboy spy. For them, Craig's open display of bloody bruises suggests an angst and despair not acknowledged by Connery's gentleman spy. Drawing on James Chapman's comparison of Dalton's Bond (1987-1994) with Michael Keaton's brooding, conflicted Batman (1989), the authors consider the extent to which Bond, like other heroic archetypes, has been re-written to reflect changing cultural, social and political contexts.

From spy to superhero

Empire Magazine's recent special issue on 50 years of 007 features a centre spread photo of Daniel Craig's Bond standing on the rooftop of the old Admiralty Offices overlooking both the Ministry of Defence and Whitehall. Visible along the skyline are Westminster, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and Canary Wharf. Craig's stance atop the symbolic plinth is statuesque – wide legged, feet firmly planted and shoulders thrown back. The rugged profile is turned towards the Union Jack flying in the mid ground. The caption reads 'On Her Majesty's Service'! It seems James Bond now has a license to do just about anything.

And it is fifty years since the fictional M16 agent – codename 007 – ditched his paperback cover to become the world's favourite movie spy. To celebrate, there is a 50th anniversary Blu-ray box set of all 22 official EON Production films, a new game (**007 Legends**) of Bond's most memorable missions, and a set of Royal Mail stamps featuring the best posters. The release of *Skyfall* this November – the 23rd instalment in the James Bond series – makes 007 the longest-running film franchise in cinema history. To date, more than 30 million Bond games in Nintendo, Xbox, PlayStation and Atari formats have been sold. Bond novels still sell globally at 100 million and counting. And the 007 film franchise still remains in the top three for box office sales – worth £1 billion.

*One Bond, many representations*

Over the years Bond has been portrayed by Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan and now Daniel Craig. And Bond's chameleon-like ability to change with each performance, yet remain the same, challenges any investigation into his iconic meanings.

Michael Wilson, producer of *Skyfall* and screenwriter of many of the 007 films, says:
Miss Jean Louise. Stand-up, your father’s passin’.

The copy above at the top of the page reads: My inspiration – Daniel Craig.

In the lower right-hand corner is an image of the product advertised – the new Bond 50 Blu-ray box set, with copy detailing its availability for purchase, along with the price.

As an advert, the text is both a complex branding exercise and a simple display promotional. Only those with specialised knowledge of cinema or literature would be able to identify the line from the American classic To Kill a Mockingbird. It is spoken by the black housekeeper Cal to the young daughter of Atticus Finch. Portrayed on film by Gregory Peck, Finch is a lawyer who defends a black southern man against a false allegation of rape in a small town. The film, based on the novel by Harper Lee, represents Finch standing alone against a violent lynch mob fuelled by ignorance and bigotry.

The symbolic association of Craig with Peck, Bond and Finch is a significant departure from the motifs of girls, guns and gadgets which have defined 007 for the last five decades. Finch is also a fictional hero who serves his community. And he is willing to risk his life to protect the civil rights of one individual – even against the majority. Through the course of the narrative the meaning of the title is revealed. Though Finch is a sharp shooter, he dislikes senseless violence – such as killing a mockingbird.

that be. His gaze takes in all of the notable institutional symbols of 21st-century British rule such as government (Houses of Parliament), military (Ministry of Defence), finance (Canary Wharf) and culture (Big Ben).

Weiner and Whitfield identify the effects of a post 9/11 culture as being responsible for creating a Bond who is less certain of himself as a spy, but is now more an avenger of evil. And the watchful gaze of Craig’s Bond does invite comparison with that of Batman looming protectively over Gotham City. Certainly Bond’s reincarnation as ‘Defender of the Realm’ appears more superhero than spy.

Bond’s upright posture and muscular frame signify his strength and determination. His lone rooftop position and perspective equate his role and status with that of an invincible national hero. The colours – muted greys and blues – indicate the secret agent has a serious job to do. Below, the cars and pedestrians appear small and vulnerable. The over the shoulder point-of-view shot foregrounds Craig’s Bond making him appear larger than life and omniscient.

Craig and Peck

On the previous page of the magazine, Daniel Craig appears in a full page HMV advert. Shot in black and white, the full on close-up depicts Craig relaxed in a white button-down shirt, collar open. He is smiling. Just below his left shoulder is a quote:
Weiner and Whitfield argue that Connery’s Bond ‘at his best was an avenging angel of the free world, at his worst an instrument of state-sponsored terrorism, killing on command to insure the interests of a singular political agenda.’ So it is interesting to consider that To Kill a Mockingbird was made in 1962 – the same year as Dr. No.

The original trailer for Dr. No, on the other hand, declared: **Bond has a licence to kill whoever, whenever and wherever he likes.**

The line seems shocking now – especially in comparison to Craig’s more responsible image. But, at the time, Connery’s Bond, with his casual attitudes to sex and violence, represented a Tarantino-style cool for a sixties audience. The film’s high-impact narrative elements signified an updating of the classic black and white spy films which characterised the genre. The animated gun barrel title sequences – Connery crouched and ready for action, scenes of explosions, shoot-outs, car chases and speedboat escapes – were sexy and innovative.

**From Connery to Craig**

Connery’s Bond gave spy films a license to thrill. He could either kill a girl or love her, and frequently did both. The Connery Bond films might even have five or six Bond girls, compared to Craig’s one or two. Female characters were easily dispensable in the early films. Miss Moneypenny was the only woman with a regular role for the first thirty years of the series. M was a role reserved for a mature male actor until Judi Dench took it over. But the sex scenes were tame in comparison to Craig’s Bond. And the scenes of violence are not realistic. Connery’s Bond escapes Dr. No’s shark infested underwater chamber without even a bloody nose.

This was a fantasy adventure film with a general audience certificate. The brightly coloured mise-en-scène made the most of the Jamaican location setting with its aqua blue sea and white sand beaches. And this theme is carried through to the pale blue polo shirts and slacks worn by Connery, and co-star Ursula Andress’s famous white bikini. Scenes filmed in local nightspots reflected the lifestyles and music tastes of sophisticated young Londoners of the time. One scene includes a local Jamaican ska and calypso band – Byron Lee and the Dragonaires – performing ‘Jump Up’ which became a number one hit after the film’s release.

The poster for Dr. No signifies its light-hearted entertainment style through its yellow background. The graphic representation of Connery is foregrounded. Depicted with his trademark raised eyebrow, knowing look and gun cocked – the image is cartoonish. The large cast of Bond girls in mini-skirts and bikinis is provocative but illustrative of the film’s pop style. Dr. No promised a visual spectacle of both eye candy and action.

And Conner’s dynamic physicality, perfectly timed one-liners and sophisticated sexual innuendos invited audiences to laugh at, rather than judge, his exploits. So it is easy to understand how Austin Powers could spoof the early films in The Spy Who Shagged Me. But Conner’s Bond is confident – not weighed down by an age of piss-takes or uncertainty. Conner’s Bond thrived on danger – because self-doubt never crossed his mind. Bond dared to be himself and that mattered to a sixties audience.

**The Bond formula**

According to EON Productions, the Bond formula has not changed. Bond is dispatched by MI6 to save the world from an evil mastermind, and in the process encounters beautiful women, freakish henchmen and sadistic tortures. Invariably placed in impossible situations and exotic locations, Bond escapes in style with daring stunts or expensive cars. Even the original Bond theme and gun barrel sequence are still used, though updated for each new actor.

For Bronwyn Cosgrove, co-curator of Barbican’s Designing 007: 50 Years of Bond, the character’s iconic meanings have always been about the style:

Style invaded every aspect of the filmmaking process. The style gave the films their substance, from title sequences to costumes, sets, crafting of the Bond character by Ian Fleming, locations, stunts and gadgets – which were created as luxury items which predated the iPods.

The remarkable thing about the James Bond
films is that they were consistently stylish. Design technology shaped them. They were always made by the very best craftsmen. Bond signature items such as Roger Moore’s Lotus Spree, the golden gun – that was actually a pioneering electric lighter crafted in 14 carat gold; and 007’s suede and ivory attaché case was made by Mayfair Leather (all for the films).

It’s clear that Bond films draw on brands which have a long heritage (Prada, Armani and Ford all made costumes for the films), but in many ways EON Productions is itself like a heritage brand.

The birth of Bond

**Bond. James Bond.** The classic Bond signature introduction – now the most famous and quoted of 007 catch phrases – is first delivered in *Casino Royale*, the cold war spy novel by **Ian Fleming** written in 1953. **Shaken not stirred** is another Bond quip which establishes the character’s iconic style. Bond’s blunt yet memorable way of speaking is instantly recognisable, drawing comparisons with Sherlock Holmes (‘**Elementary my dear Watson**’) and Philip Marlowe (‘**She gave me a smile I could feel in my hip pocket**’).

Here, at the beginning, in the character’s original form, Bond is still a complex character. Though Fleming would later say he wanted Bond to be a ‘neutral figure – an anonymous, blunt instrument wielded by a government department’. Bond is anything but that. The character was intended as an archetypal spy – a composite of the English gentleman spy and the American noir detective with a bit of the author thrown in. Fleming based many of the stories on his own experiences as a naval intelligence officer and news journalist during and after World War II. The book is written in the first person – from **Bond’s point of view**. And the detailed observations of Bond’s upmarket lifestyle reflect Fleming’s own. Even as Bond methodically plans his strategies for outmanoeuvring Le Chiffre at the casino, his thoughts turn towards the design of Vesper’s Dior dress, the wine selection, and the best way to eat caviar.

**David Leigh,** author of **The Complete Guide to the Drinks of James Bond** and proprietor of **The James Bond Dossier** website believes it is Bond’s ability to blend in with the jet set crowd that holds the key to the character’s iconic meanings. Kingsley Amis (author of the **James Bond Dossier** – a critical analysis of the character) said that Bond was essentially a blank slate and that people could project themselves onto James Bond’s character.

He is able to deal with any situation he is put in; he knows how to behave in sophisticated casinos when abroad and fit in with local customs. And I think we all want to be able to have that gift. I also think that part of his original success is because 007 symbolised Britain as at the forefront of fighting the cold war.

But Bond’s desire for luxury is matched only by his need to defeat the world’s most megalomaniac villains. Though classy in his manners, Bond is predatory in his instincts. But he is also philosophical. Recovering from having his 00s pummelled, Bond reflects on the nature of evil. The purpose of someone like Le Chiffre, he concludes, is that they create ‘**a norm of badness**’ by which ‘**a norm of goodness could exist**’.

So it is understandable that EON would choose to return to this first Bond story when launching Daniel Craig’s Bond. In many ways, Craig’s dark avenging hero is closer to the original prototype imagined by Fleming. To date, **director Sam Mendes** will not reveal much about his plans for Bond in **Skyfall**. The film is not based on a Bond book. But Barbara Broccoli suggests the title represents an emotional journey. If Mendes’ previous filmography is anything to go on, then **redemption** will be a key theme. Bond’s nemesis for **Skyfall** is played by **Javier Bardem** – an actor known for his terrifyingly realistic portrayals of evil. So **Skyfall** promises to be even darker than **Casino Royale** or **Quantum of Solace** – though there aren’t any storylines tying the three films together.

Pre-release material suggests **Skyfall** will be a **dark neo-noir thriller**. And production blogs feature dramatic night scenes shot on location in Shanghai. At least one stunt includes a Batman-style leap off a skyscraper, neon lights casting blue shadows across the city streets below. We can assume Bond lands on his feet, because he always does. And Bond’s daring escapes are also an important part of his cinematic identity.

**Psychoanalytic film theorists** such as **Christian Metz** would understand Bond to be a mirror of ourselves, representing a super-ego of extraordinary ability. And that is perhaps the true meaning of Bond. As Bond makes his get-away, cascading a heart-thumping 6,000 feet down a gorge in the Swiss Alps in **Goldeneye** or ski-jumping an impossible distance in **Live and Let Die**, we also escape from the ordinary world into that special one of James Bond. Because if Bond’s powers have no limits, neither do ours.

If you are still in any doubt as to Bond’s iconic meanings, then read this user review for **Everything or Nothing**:

> **The package that wraps the new 007 experience is important because it immerses you and brings you one step closer to believing that you are James Bond. And, let’s face it, that’s what we all want to be when we’re playing these games.**

So it is no longer enough that everybody **wants to be** James Bond – we want to **believe it** too. And that is one extraordinary icon.

Brenda Hamlet is a freelance journalist and teacher living in Oxford.
NO SECOND ACTS?

Authentic indie hipstress, gangsta Nancy Sinatra, chronicler of the dark side of Americana – or brilliant social media manipulator? Ian Bland traces the transformation of Lizzy Grant to Lana del Rey, and wonders what we can learn from her iconography about the current state of the music industry.

So how long does it take before you can call yourself an icon these days? In days gone by, icon status might have remained pending for years; however in these impatient, accelerated times, you can have your papers processed and icon status stamped on your profile in a matter of months. Don’t believe me? Just look at the case of Elizabeth Grant.

Who? Well, clearly neither the name Elizabeth Grant nor its abbreviated form – Lizzy Grant – was iconic enough. It didn’t combine the glitz of the 50s film starlet, with the heat of the Mexican border, laced with smoke, neon, sex appeal and a dash of danger. But the name Lana del Rey did, and so Elizabeth Grant was reborn.

A very different kind of American icon, the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, once famously observed that there are ‘no second acts in American life’. The rapid ascent of the second incarnation of Lizzy Grant would suggest things have changed since then. Like Fitzgerald, Lana del Rey has a fascination with the American Dream, that doomed, damaged set of ideals wrapped in the shroud of the stars and stripes. That fascination runs indelibly through her ‘debut’ album, colouring virtually every song.

So let’s do what countless record company executives will undoubtedly also be doing in the hope of locating the source of the magic and recreating it: let’s return to the start and work out where Lana del Rey came from and what the meteoric nature of her fame can tell us about the record industry today. And in the process we may discover what makes her an ideal case study for anyone studying the contemporary music industry.

Back to the start – the death of the gatekeeper

In 2009 a singer named Elizabeth Grant went into a recording studio and made an album. Few people took any notice of this event at the time and it’s only recently that it has sparked much interest. Released in 2010, it was titled Lana del Rey AKA Lizzy Grant. It wasn’t a success, but there was something about that name …

Ever since an American University student called Shawn Fanning unleashed his file-sharing program Napster on the world in 1999 and blew the doors off the record industry, the old way of doing things has disintegrated. Every aspect of the industry from production to distribution to marketing has felt the tremors. One key aspect is the way in which the gatekeepers, who traditionally served to introduce music to the audience, have had their authority challenged. The positions held by publications such as NME have been comprehensively dismantled by the prominence of blogs. NME gamely soldiers on, desperately trying to retool and reposition itself for digital natives who demand much more than a mere magazine. It might work, it might not. Like everything about this brave digital world, the cards are still mid-air and no one knows for sure exactly where they’ll land.

In place of gatekeepers like NME has come a wave of blogs and websites. Of these, Pitchfork – with its often impenetrable album reviews, eccentric ratings policy (what exactly determines the difference between a 7.2 and a 7.3 album?) and litany of bands that you can never be exactly certain aren’t the figment of some hipster in-joke (well, have you ever heard Shlomo or SebastiAn...
From indie to major

No sooner had ‘Video Games’ established her on the map than her authenticity was subjected to even greater scrutiny with the revelation that she had signed a deal with major label Interscope, part of the media conglomerate Universal. It wouldn’t be the first time a first release has been produced by an indie label to stoke the interest of the influential, early-adopting community before a major label has moved in to capitalise on the more lucrative album release. It seems that Lana del Rey has been another textbook execution of this particular marketing strategy.

But what of the lover scorned? The internet is not known for its reticence when it comes to voicing disapproval, and much vitriol has been spilled in the name of Lana del Rey. Though not in itself very edifying, the phenomenon does tell us much about the instantaneous, globalised currency of fame in the internet age.

Traditionally artists have cut their teeth in the live arena, steadily building up their name through small gigs and support slots. Taking the fast-track to viral success, ‘Video Games’ bypassed this particular route, meaning that very few people had actually heard Lana del Rey perform live. Two more things helped propel ‘Video Games’ on its way to viral glory: the song itself, a lilting, haunting ballad that burned with melancholy and understated drama and (let’s not be too coy about this) the looks of the person doing the singing.

This latter point draws us towards one of the most interesting dimensions of Lana del Rey’s rise to fame, the fascination with her appearance, and what this in turn reveals about the sexist attitudes that still pervade the music industry. The long-tail of the internet means that, even if you get the chance of a second act, the legacy of act one will only ever be a few clicks away. So it transpired, with many of those lining up to pass comment deciding that Lana del Rey was noticeably fuller of lip than plain old Lizzy Grant.

The question of authenticity

The suspicion of cosmetic surgery became just one more strand in the tangled mesh of questions relating to the notion of authenticity. Blogs such as Pitchfork tend to go pretty big on authenticity. They like to feel that the artists they celebrate are real and organic, not contrivances funded by media conglomerates. And, to some, this was how Lana del Rey started to appear. Authenticity has always been a questionable commodity when it comes to popular music. It is highly unlikely that blues musician Robert Johnson really had a midnight appointment at the crossroads with the devil where he signed over the deeds to his soul. Bob Dylan wasn’t Bob Dylan at birth. And Mick Jagger wasn’t born in a crossfire hurricane, no matter how much that might explain his subsequent dancing style. Mythologising has always been a part of the fabric of popular music; del Rey is just doing as so many have done before her.
When going viral is not good news

Equipping all of us with the tools of the critic has been one of the great successes of the internet, but it comes at a cost, and the thing that most often costs us is a sense of proportion. Saturday Night Live is something of an American institution, but its ratings are relatively small (compare its average of roughly 7 million to the 20 million plus who tune in to American Idol). Until that is, the entire internet deems your performance laughably bad. Then a truth of the internet is revealed: the bad goes viral much quicker than the good.

By this stage, Lana del Rey was already moving beyond the confines of the blogosphere. In the UK she performed on Later with Jools Holland (compulsory for those seeking credible music status) and not too long after was on Jonathan Ross’s Saturday night show (compulsory for those seeking to sell their music to an audience who buy CDs in supermarkets).

Borrowing from the movies

Her second major video ‘Born to Die’ had none of the grainy, low-budget, tumblised beauty of the first. Instead it was a lavish production that owed much to director David Lynch, particularly his off-kilter road-movie/romance Wild at Heart. Like Lynch, Lana del Rey has an obsession with what is festering at the dark heart of the American dream. Tellingly, by the end our bobby-socks-wearing heroine is being carried from the wreckage of a burning car.

Her album cover also evokes David Lynch. In a medium-shot the singer stares blankly towards the camera, above her clear blue sky, behind her the picket fence, that enduring symbol of suburban America that Lynch was so eager to pry behind. Adding to the blue of the sky and the white of her blouse is the red of her lips, the iconic trinity of colours that defines much of her work.

Lessons from Lana

Yet for one so modern in her utilisation of the media, there is much that is strangely retrogressive in del Rey’s work, particularly in her construction of gender. She appears to embrace a stereotype of passive femininity that is less post-feminist and actually pre-feminist. It’s perhaps misleading to look to lyrics for a gender manifesto, but the line in ‘Video Games’, ‘It’s you, it’s you, it’s all for you’ seems emblematic of her work.

So what can we learn from the rise of Lana del Rey? And what might record company execs find of value as they look to use her rise to fame as the template for a new kind of success? Use the blogosphere to kickstart interest, but beware of its bite, and be ready to outrun the hipsters. The DIY approach can pay dividends – ‘Video Games’ was a demo version, the video supposedly stitched together by the artist herself – but viral sensations can cut both ways. Look beautiful, but be ready to have your image dissected and sliced apart like it’s going under the surgeon’s knife. Oh, and try to have songs as good as ‘Video Games’. It’s the last one that might be the hardest trick of all.

Ian Bland teaches Media at Holy Cross School, and is an examiner for WJEC.
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ALBUM COVER

In the age of iTunes, can there be a future for the ancient art of album-cover iconography? Christopher Budd goes behind the scenes of creative agency The Intro Partnership to discover that album cover art is alive and well. He offers a guide to cover-reading, with ten covers that changed the world.

The art of the album cover is a curious one. Part packaging, part advertising, often an insight into an artist’s worldview, and usually the happy result of a successful collaboration between creative minds, the best album cover art illustrates and accompanies the music in a way that creates a whole package. Great album covers from the last 70 years have become recognisable cultural objects in their own right, and some have become influential works that have made their mark on other media.

The designer’s perspective
To find out more about the work of creating album cover art in the 21st century, I spoke to Julian House, a creative partner at London creative agency The Intro Partnership. Intro work across a number of sectors, and Julian’s work is predominantly music-based.

First I asked him whether it was the industry norm for an organisation like his to pitch for new work, or whether it comes from other channels. I was curious too to know whether other album cover designers worked in agencies like this, or whether it was more commonly a freelance occupation.

JH: We’re quite an unusual company in the breadth of work we cover; often jobs from one sector come in through another one. We have done corporate work where the client has responded well to the music industry work we’ve done, for example.

As regards music industry work we do pitch, but only if we feel the client has come to us because they like what we do, rather than being part of a bigger competitive pitch process. Our best work comes from working with a client who wants us to do the job because they like other things we’ve done. But the work is better viewed as a collaboration, with a constant dialogue between the artist and us.

We’ll work together as a team or as individuals depending on the project. There are designers at Intro who are known for their different approaches and often that’s what the client wants. In a way we work as individuals under a collective umbrella. Sometimes I’ll be doing a print campaign/cover and when that requires a video I’ll work together with one of the other directors here to bring it to fruition.

So it seems that the structure of having a creative umbrella organisation can be very beneficial. I wanted to know more about the briefing process and how much the different parties involved can influence the artistic direction. I asked Julian where the brief usually comes from on a new project: does it come solely from the label or management, or does the artist ever get a say? How much input does he have as a designer?

JH: There may be a brief from the record company that covers the basics, like whether...
the artist needs to be on the cover, who is the demographic, etc. But we take most of our direction from the artist. More often than not this involves sitting down and talking with them about the ideas behind the album, anything they’ve seen that they liked (not just music-related, but films, books etc.). Then we’ll go off and do several sets of visuals and present them, then hone it down from there.

Generally we work on jobs where we’re expected to come up with our own ideas based on an initial brief. We tend to avoid jobs that are too prescriptive, but even when a client has a very defined idea we open up the conversation and bring new ideas in to complement, so it’s never a one way thing.

I asked Julian how far genre conventions play a role in his design process, and whether, beyond the specific brief, there are things an album sleeve should always do.

JH: I tend not to think of designs in terms of genre; each specific job exists in its own world with its own set of reference points. An album sleeve is an entry point into the universe that the music is in; it’s a window into the themes and ideas of the artist.

The Primal Scream covers I’ve created will start with a conversation about references, everything from world events to underground films, punk fanzines, pop art, early video art, Italian horror films … in amongst these contrasting things certain themes or images will start to emerge which can be twisted around to fit together.

For lovers of exuberant album packaging, it’s sad to see how often the art is reduced to miniscule iPod screens. Now that the days of gatefolds and lavish sleeve notes seem to be waning, at least in the mainstream, is the album sleeve still considered to be as important as it once was part of the overall package of a piece of music?

JH: There’s definitely a need for a visual accompaniment to the music. Even if an iPod image is small, we still have to update all our artwork to work as a downloadable PDF book on iTunes for an album, so the demand is still there. And there’s a resurgence of vinyl; special packaging sells quite well to a select audience. There are a lot of people still who need a tactile product, something to pore over.

For anyone considering a career in this field, I asked Julian how he got started, how the job itself has changed, and what advice he would give to aspiring designers who want to work in the field.

JH: I spent a long time at college, first a BA, then an MA. I took my folio around everywhere in London, and before I started working full time I did freelance covers for my friend’s band Broadcast. They took off, and it brought more work; but in the meantime I got a job at Intro and have been here since.

It’s an oversubscribed field, and the budgets get lower and lower every year, so you have to really want to do it. Be prepared to do other less interesting design jobs that pay better to supplement the good work. It helps to establish relationships with bands; if you have a dialogue and they feel they can trust you, they’ll come back.
Deconstructing album cover art

Album cover art can be extremely varied, utilising photos, graphics, typography, or any combination of these. As a type of media text, it can be deconstructed like any other. When analysing it, we can use the same tools we’d use to analyse and understand any visual media text.

Who made it, why, how, for whom, and for what purpose?

It’s important to think about not just who constructed this media text and why, but also who the audience is for any given text, and how they may respond to it. Of course album cover art is usually to promote an album, to make it eye-catching (it will usually be reproduced not just on CD covers, but also posters), and to tell us something about the musicians and the music behind it. While the immediate target audience is likely to be those who frequently buy music, and particularly those who favour the specific band or genre, the artwork may be designed to attract a wider audience.

With this in mind, we can consider what is actually in the image. As the image is a construction, everything has been put there deliberately and for a reason. This includes all the text, graphics and logos.

Associations and connotations

It’s also important to consider the difference between denotation, which means simply identifying the elements in the image, and connotation, which means examining what meanings and associations they might link to. For example, an image that denotes a powerful-looking car may have connotations of speed or power, but in conjunction with other elements making up the art it might also have connotations of escape, or thrill-seeking, for example. On a hip-hop cover it may well have connotations of conspicuous wealth and extravagance, given that genre’s conventions.

Signs, symbols and codes

A sign is a representation that refers to something else and has meaning, such as the car. A code means the structure of how signs are organised into systems to make meaning. These are usually divided into the technical (for example, what techniques are used to make the image, such as camera angles and lighting?) and the symbolic (what subtle indicators are there in the text to create the meaning, for example details of clothing or the arrangement of objects?). There are also written codes that include the use of language and text layout.

Composition and framing

How is the image composed? If there are numerous objects or figures in the scene, is one of them favoured? Are they all in focus? Are they all in the same visual plane? How is the image framed? Do we see more or less of anything than we feel we should? Does a certain angle, or the inclusion or omission of anything unusual from the scene say anything important? How do light, shadow and colour play a part in the image? What role does the text in the image play?

We refer to conventions as established ways of doing things – in this case they mean established forms of presenting an image. It can be helpful to examine how closely any given image tracks the conventions you’d associate with it. For example, a death metal album sleeve might conventionally use a gothic or medieval-looking typeface, horror or occult based imagery, and a lot of black. When albums deliberately do, or don’t, use these conventions, what are they saying?

Album cover art can also be self-referential, adding an extra layer of meaning to the image. For example, the Clash’s ‘London Calling’ references Elvis Presley’s debut album (see right). Why did the Clash choose this design?

Since the messages of the media text have different meanings for everyone, there is no end to the level of analysis you can make of any media text, including album cover art!

There is a lot of great study material about deconstructing images, but one book that covers a lot of this in great detail is John Berger’s Ways of Seeing. It’s from 1972, so it’s older even than me, but it’s a great resource and it’s rightly still in print.

Christopher Budd is a freelance lecturer, writer, composer and musician.
Ten iconic landmarks in album cover art history

Various Artists ‘Mambo for Cats’ 1955
RCA Victor

Design by Jim Flora
Jim Flora was one of the pioneers in this field, and his colourful, kinetic style defines this period in Jazz. He was also a magazine illustrator, and an author and illustrator of children’s books.

Beatles ‘Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’ 1967 Parlophone

Art direction by Robert Fraser
Designed by Peter Blake and Jann Haworth.
Photography by Michael Cooper

A real-life collage, depicting the influence of individual Beatles on the imaginary Sgt. Pepper band. There is a great deal of coded meaning in the choice of spectators and props. Even the inner bag has a mysterious and interesting design.

John Coltrane ‘Blue Train’ 1957 Blue Note

Design by Reid Miles
Photo by Francis Wolff

With its bold typography, simple colour scheme and striking, high-contrast photography, this is a classic example of the iconic work of Miles and Wolff, which defines the classic ‘Blue Note’ look of this period.

Miles Davis ‘Bitch’s Brew’ 1970 Columbia

Cover painting by Mati Klarwein
Laced with symbolism, Mati Klarwein’s exotic surrealistic painted image wraps around the gatefold to spectacular effect.

Yes ‘Fragile’ 1971 Atlantic

Cover art by Roger Dean
Roger Dean enjoyed a long association with prog-rock band Yes, designing both their logo, and several covers that showcased his unique graphic style. The original packaging usually included complementary artwork on the reverse and inserts, and CD reissues have replicated much of this.

Pink Floyd ‘The Dark Side of the Moon’ 1973 Capitol Records

Design by Hipgnosis (Storm Thorgerson)
Illustration by George Hardie
Produced by Storm Thorgerson and Aubrey Powell

Inspired by a physics textbook, and the band’s desire to use a simple design rather than a photograph, this famous cover also nods to Pink Floyd’s famous light shows. The artwork, which nowhere mentions the name of the band or album, continues seamlessly around the gatefold sleeve.
**Nirvana ‘Nevermind’ 1991 DGC**

An iconic image for the grunge generation, which spawned numerous homages and helped to set Nirvana apart from the growing crowd of their peers.

**Björk ‘Debut’ 1993 One Little Indian**

Stéphane Sednaoui's bold and engaging photo of Björk combined with the ME Company’s minimalist design to create a modern classic. Sednaoui went on to add music video directing to his impressive list of skills.
Nick Lacey introduces a powerful drama-documentary film, made 46 years ago, which offers important lessons to the politicians of the 21st century.

One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter
Gerald Seymour: Harry’s Game (1975)

What makes The Battle of Algiers (La Battaglia di Algeri, Italy-Algeria, 1966), a black and white, foreign language film about an Algerian uprising against French colonial rule in Algeria 50 years ago, so iconic?

• First, the style in which it is shot.
  Although every moment of the film is a dramatic reconstruction, it looks and feels as if it is showing the events as they actually happened.

• Secondly, despite the fact that the film was made with the cooperation of the Algerian government soon after independence from France was gained, it is even-handed in its portrayal of the opposing sides. Imagine Hollywood making a film about the ‘war’ against Al Qaeda. Do you think it would show Americans committing atrocities against innocent people? (NB: See endnote.) The Battle of Algiers shows indiscriminate violence from both sides.

• Finally, despite being about events half a
Neorealist conventions

Although *The Battle of Algiers* is not a neorealist film, it does use a variety of techniques to appear to offer a ‘window on the world’ on this particularly grim moment in French colonial history and on the terrible civil war between native Algerians and the European settlers.

Although all the *pro-filmic* events (that is, what is filmed by the camera) are constructed specially for the film, many are shot in a *documentary style*, where a *handheld camera* follows the action rather than anticipating it, which would allow for a ‘smooth’ composition. In addition, *montage* is used to give an overview of events, often accompanied by a *news reporter’s voiceover* explaining what is happening. The voiceover is also used in some sequences that look as though they are *newsreels* – short news films that were shown in the cinema at the time. The film was *processed to look grainy*, mimicking the 16mm, rather than 35mm, film stock that was used in newsreels. The use of *long lenses*, that flatten the mise-en-scène, also gives a sense of the ‘real’, as this technique allows action to be filmed from a safe distance, and so is commonly used in news reporting.

Aspects of the film that are in the neorealist tradition include the *use of real location and non-actors*. Non-actors often signify realism because the lack of ‘performance’ connotes ‘real people’, thereby heightening the sense that the events actually happened. Only one professional was used in the film: *Jean Martin* played a composite character (an amalgam of two characters for dramatic purposes), Colonel Mathieu, who led the French paratroopers.

The background and the production team

Algiers is the capital of Algeria, until 1962 a French colony. During the Algerian War of Independence, the Battle of Algiers was the site of an attempt by the *Algerian National Liberation Front* (FLN), between 1954 and 1955, to overthrow French rule. In response, the French sent in paratroopers to quell the unrest. The film charts the conflict in gruelling detail.

Saadi Yacef, one of the film’s producers, was actually a leader in the FLN, who were leading the fight against French colonial rule; he also plays Djafer in the film. The film is based on his book *Souvenirs de la Bataille d’Alger* (1962).

Given Yacef’s involvement, it would not be at all surprising if the version of events portrayed in the film were extremely one-sided: after all, it is the victors who write the history. However, an outsider’s view on the events was invited by commissioning the Italians *Franco Solinas* and *Gillo Pontecorvo* (who also directed) to script the film. In addition, the producers consciously chose Italian filmmakers who were likely to follow Italy’s neorealist tradition.

Neorealism is a political filmmaking movement that started in the aftermath of World War II; its mission to show the world ‘as it is’, representing the lives of the poor and oppressed, usually using real locations and non-professional actors.

century ago, it’s entirely relevant to today. It was reported that it was screened at the Pentagon before the 2003 invasion of Iraq as a film that shows ‘How to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas.’
Some scenes are conventionally shot, using for example the shot-reverse/shot pattern for conversations and following the rules of continuity editing. However, overall the editing of the film combines the two styles seamlessly so that what we see is an entirely convincing portrayal of events.

An even-handed representation

The film portrays the escalation of the war for independence and shows indiscriminate bombings and shootings from both sides. One famous sequence shows Arab women using make-up to appear European so they can place bombs; in one instance in a bar where young people are dancing. If the women had not made themselves up to look European, they would have been unable to access these locations. These bombings were a response to a French vigilante bombing of the Casbah, a densely populated area of Algiers that was the base of the Resistance. By using the same Bach chorale to accompany the horrific images of the aftermaths of the bombings, Pontecorvo emphasises that the deaths on both sides are equally tragic.

Another example of the film’s even-handed stance is where French gendarmes are shown saving Algerians from being beaten up by an enraged French mob. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the French are not portrayed simply as villains, the film was banned in France for many years.

The French are shown torturing Algerians in order to find out where the leaders of the FLN are hiding. At a press conference, Colonel Mathieu explains that if the French want Algeria to remain
French, then torture is necessary. This refreshingly honest statement contrasts sharply with the denial, by the current and previous British governments, of their most recent involvements in torture and rendering (kidnapping) suspects to hostile countries.

Colonel Mathieu is a complex character who is seen to be sympathetic to the men he is torturing, and to admire their struggle. He’s shown to be a highly professional soldier who follows orders; and he has fought in the French Resistance against the Nazis. As such he is represented as a tool of politicians, the people who set wars in motion but don’t dirty their hands.

The torture is horrific: Pontecorvo doesn’t flinch from showing us the violence, but distances us from it with Bach B Minor Mass on the soundtrack. This distancing effect allows us to watch the torture, whereas if the victims’ screams had been heard on the soundtrack, the scene might have been so disturbing that audiences wouldn’t have been able to watch. The use of music by Bach, which connotes ‘high culture’, also suggests that although humanity is capable of great things, it is also able to act in deeply disgusting ways.

Immediately following the torture, we see a hijacked ambulance careering through the European sector of Algiers machine-gunning anyone who happens to be out: violence is shown to breed violence.

**The Battle of Algiers – an icon for today?**

What does the film have to tell us about the current political situation? The film makes it clear that torture is wrong and that you should not impose rule upon other nations. This might cause us to reflect on American behaviour in Iraq and Afghanistan (and British complicity in this).

Even though Pontecorvo is even-handed in his representation of the battle, he’s undoubtedly anti-colonialist. During the post-World War 2 period, most countries with empires were granting independence to their colonies; France eventually gave up Algeria in 1962. However, in the 21st century, colonialism still exists, though it’s far more likely to be cultural, as seen for example, in the ubiquity of McDonald’s and MTV across the world.

Another lesson we could learn from the film is that ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’. The vague ‘War on Terror’ we have been fighting since 2001 ignores the fact that anyone who is a ‘terrorist’ acts for a reason. How many of you know exactly why Al Qaeda flew those planes into the World Trade Centre? Until we understand the grievances created, for example, by Israel’s occupation of Palestine, then we have little hope of ever resolving conflict. As events in Afghanistan suggest, wars of ideas cannot be won by weapons.

One final lesson we might take from the film is the growing importance of women in the 21st century. Pontecorvo’s film shows them to be crucial in the resistance against the French; the last shot of the film is of unstoppable women protesting against their oppression. In last year’s Egyptian ‘Arab Spring’, women were also crucial in overthrowing despotism. Although the forces of patriarchy are trying to reassert themselves in Egypt, perhaps we would all benefit if women had an equal say in political decisions. It would reduce macho posturing and maybe we would try and understand the opposition rather than simply wipe them out.

*The TV series *Homeland* (2011-) actually did show such a scene and it was broadcast on the cable network Showtime in America (Channel 4 in UK). It is produced by Fox 21, owned by News Corporation, and is an ‘exception that proves the rule’.

**Follow it up**

 outsiders the Law (Hors la loi, France-Algeria-Belgium-Tunisia-Italy, 2010) is an interesting companion film to *Battle of Algiers*. It focuses on the FLN terrorist campaign in France and the equally terrifying semi-official Red Hand vigilantes who opposed them. Writer-director Rachid Bouchareb casts the story as a genre (gangster) film, focusing on how three brothers came to be involved in fighting for their country’s liberation. Although it marginalises women’s roles, it does effectively portray French injustices. For example, scenes of celebration at the end of World War II in Paris are contrasted with the massacre of Algerians, by the French, who were protesting for their own freedom at that time.
THE EYES HAVE IT!

To look at an image, our eyes do a lot of work. Even when we are just staring, our eyes are constantly moving.

It has a limit though: spin around in a chair, stop suddenly, and whilst you’re disoriented you’ll experience post-rotatory nystagmus — your eyes track to correct the spin even when it stops.

Balance organs in our inner ears (our vestibular system) work with the brain, creating vestibular-ocular reflexes or gaze-holding movements, so when our heads move, the image doesn’t.

Our brains also create optokinetic responses to compensate for moving images.

Because the brain is much quicker than the eye, the superior colliculus in the brain controls this, using a kind of virtual reality or neural theatre to calculate the required movement of the eye muscles.

And even when both the head and object of attention are stationary, our eyes move with a rapid, small-amplitude tremor; without that tremor, the image on our retina would quickly fade.

The eye can move fast in saccades, at up to 400° per second we can shift our gaze to a new part of an image in 25msec.

Research into gaze-based interaction is moving nearly as fast. In a recent experiment, subjects were able to play World of Warcraft, using only the movements of their eyes.

As computers grow ever more powerful, there will soon be no need for us to move, apart from with our eyes. Our eyelids may need to join a gym!
WHAT LIES BENEATH?

Sarah Lund and Lisbeth Salander – the feminist icons of Nordic noir
Jonathan Nunns explores the idiosyncrasies and appeals of two very contemporary icons from an area which until relatively recently was under-represented in popular culture – the world of Scandinavian crime drama

Where are the world’s violent places? America, with its street crime? Mexico, with its drug cartels? Italy, with its Mafia? What about the war zones of the world? Syria? Somalia? Sudan? Your list probably does not include Scandinavia, the name for those comfortable (if cold) countries including Norway, Denmark and Sweden. These places we stereotype as wealthy, democratic and liberal. Settled countries, known for their equality. Tidy places that rarely make the news.

True crime

In contrast to this image, Scandinavia has been subject to occasional explosions of violence, made more shocking by the assumed serenity of the backdrop. In 2005 a series of Danish cartoons, seen as critical of Islam, caused riots around the world, with one of the artists subsequently attacked in the street. In 1986, the Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, was shot dead whilst walking home, an unsolved crime which conspiracy theorists variously attributed to the CIA, the KGB and the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Most notoriously, the Norwegian neo-Nazi, Anders Breivik murdered seventy-seven people in a crime of astounding ferocity in July 2011.

Such incidents imply that dangerous undercurrents exist in the most apparently serene of places. Pent-up forces and resentments made potent by their suppression; a libertarian Prime Minister shot dead in one of the safest countries on earth; religious controversy detonating in a society known for tolerance; and a spree killer attempting to destroy multiculturalism in order to defend a distorted ideal of racial purity.

Pulp fiction

The attempt to explain these contradictions partly explains why Scandinavian crime fiction, otherwise known as Nordic noir, has become a publishing, film and television phenomenon. Henning Mankell’s novels, featuring the dysfunctional detective Kurt Wallander, were the first to draw wider attention. Successfully televised in Sweden, they were critically acclaimed and subsequently adapted for an English language version by the BBC. Jo Nesbø’s novels featuring Norwegian cop Harry Hole sell in their millions. His novel Headhunters recently
became an acclaimed film and the subject of a mooted American remake. However, in international terms, the breakthrough characters were Sarah Lund from Danish crime series *The Killing* and Lisbeth Salander, from *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*. Salander is the protagonist of Larsson’s novels, subsequently made into a successful Swedish film trilogy and a high-profile Hollywood adaptation, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, USA, 2011). American remakes of subtitled originals have often been derided. However, David Fincher, the director of dark thrillers such as *Se7en* (Fincher, USA, 1995) and *Zodiac* (Fincher, USA, 2007) was an ideal choice to translate the material, and his film more than holds its own critically in comparison to the Swedish original.

Before examining how Lund and Salander became so popular, we should also consider the literary context of Nordic noir. The sub-genre can trace its roots back to two key inspirations:

- the hard-boiled American crime novels of Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain, written in the 1940s were adapted to become signature noir films. *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, USA, 1941) and *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, USA, 1944) became classics, with their world-weary protagonists and seductive femmes fatales.
- the whodunit core of Nordic noir owes a debt to the novelist Agatha Christie, whose 1930s detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple have since become staples of the British television schedules.

The cult of Sarah Lund

*The Killing’s* Copenhagen cop Sarah Lund has so far appeared in two Danish series and, as portrayed by the actress Sofie Grabol, provided BBC4 with its break-out sleeper hit of 2011. Lund is the antithesis of the glossy female cops of series like *CSI*. Instead of lip-gloss and catwalk looks, Lund is middle-aged, make-up free and dresses down in jeans and a cream-on-brown Fair Isle sweater, which, ironically, became a cult fashion item with viewers during *Season One*. Lund exists in a Copenhagen characterised by gloom, darkness and drizzle. In the real-time narrative of the show, each episode represents a day in the advancing murder investigation. Both seasons focus on violence towards women and the impact of crime on those left behind. *Season One* has the death of vulnerable Danish teen Nanna Birk-Larsson; the second opens with a female lawyer tortured and left for dead in a Copenhagen park, and ends with lethal violence directed towards Lund herself.

The long shadow of Dirty Harry

What is so compelling, apart from the peerless scripting, is Lund. Unglamorous but womanly, intelligent and implacable, Lund shares some similarities with the stereotyped TV cop. Her home life, with her son and Swedish boyfriend, withers in the face of her relentless work ethic and, like Wallander, she is uncommunicative and repressed. However, Lund is otherwise unlike the hard-drinking, chain-smoking protagonists of series like *Life On Mars*. She makes a perfect sleuth, closer to the BBC’s recent *Sherlock* in her...
Most controversial scenes of the book and the films adapted from it. Salander is graphically abused and raped by her guardian but she then exacts a retribution so fitting that it utterly reduces and emasculates her abuser. Salander’s personality is intensely introverted. In her early twenties, she projects herself as a tattooed and pierced goth/punk, her attitude summed up by the slogan on her T-shirt in Fincher’s film: ‘Fuck you, you fucking fucker’.

Critics have theorised that Salander is either on the Autistic or Asperger’s Syndrome spectrum due to her extreme social introversion. However, despite overwhelming problems, including childhood abuse, Salander empowers herself, avenging herself on her abusers to become, like Lund, a detective of genius.

Fincher’s film features the current Bond, Daniel Craig, in the role of the stock noir protagonist, Mikael Blomkvist, in a reference to the classic neo noir, Chinatown (Polanski, USA, 1974):

Blomkvist is the story’s Jake Gittes: a down at heel investigator not quite as clever as he thinks he is, but decent and dedicated.

Blomkvist and Salander take on a 45-year-old unsolved murder. In a reference to the 2008 financial crash, it becomes apparent that investigative journalist Blomkvist has been ruined by a corrupt financier and that the murderer hides amongst an elite family that owns one of the most powerful companies in Sweden. As Blomkvist is hired to investigate the cold case, his new employer succinctly summarises:

Enter the dragon

The other iconic figure of the Nordic noir sub-genre is the multifaceted and contradictory Lisbeth Salander, a character of genuine complexity. Her origins can be best explained by the original title of Stieg Larsson’s novel, Men Who Hate Women. Perhaps this title does not have the bestselling ring of its English language title, The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo. However, it nails the subject matter, identifying the implacable misogyny at the heart of the trilogy.

Salander is interesting because she is such a contradiction. A computer expert and hacker of genius, she has also been registered mentally incompetent and made a ward of the Swedish state, given into the care of a sexually abusive lawyer. This paradox is crystallised in one of the most controversial scenes of the book and the films adapted from it. Salander is graphically abused and raped by her guardian but she then exacts a retribution so fitting that it utterly reduces and emasculates her abuser. Salander’s personality is intensely introverted. In her early twenties, she projects herself as a tattooed and pierced goth/punk, her attitude summed up by the slogan on her T-shirt in Fincher’s film: ‘Fuck you, you fucking fucker’.

Critics have theorised that Salander is either on the Autistic or Asperger’s Syndrome spectrum due to her extreme social introversion. However, despite overwhelming problems, including childhood abuse, Salander empowers herself, avenging herself on her abusers to become, like Lund, a detective of genius.

Fincher’s film features the current Bond, Daniel Craig, in the role of the stock noir protagonist, Mikael Blomkvist, in a reference to the classic neo noir, Chinatown (Polanski, USA, 1974):

Blomkvist is the story’s Jake Gittes: a down at heel investigator not quite as clever as he thinks he is, but decent and dedicated.

Blomkvist and Salander take on a 45-year-old unsolved murder. In a reference to the 2008 financial crash, it becomes apparent that investigative journalist Blomkvist has been ruined by a corrupt financier and that the murderer hides amongst an elite family that owns one of the most powerful companies in Sweden. As Blomkvist is hired to investigate the cold case, his new employer succinctly summarises:
Feminist icons

Between her and Lund, Salander is clearly the more showy character. With her bisexuality, motorcycle leathers and ‘fuck off’ T-shirt, she is a classic rebel. The character has, however, come in for criticism, particularly when compared to Lund. Salander is the product of a male fantasy of how a woman could act under pressure – Lund is a woman’s idea of how a man would act.

What the two apparently very different characters reveal are aspects of the undercurrents in Scandinavian society. The Blomkvist/Salander duo unearthed a cesspool of misogyny, rape and serial murder spanning decades, and a hidden history of Nazism within the chilly landscape of an isolated Swedish island. Similarly, Lund finds murder and betrayal in what should be the safest place of all, and shines a light on a society in which the agencies designed to protect have been perverted to protect the ambitions of the powerful.

Through their representations Lund and Salander have become iconic, whilst behaving in ways that are actually iconoclastic. This is appropriate for characters whose identities are so strongly tied to their gender yet who remain outside of the ‘male gaze’ stereotypes still widely applied to women in the media. Perhaps a more predictable representation came in a poster for Fincher’s film, featuring a ferocious looking but topless Salander with Craig. However, this could also suggest that the abuse suffered by Salander in no way made her sexless, and that her ownership of her assertive sexuality is itself part of her empowerment.

Perhaps these characters have become iconic because the world in which they hunt crime with such un-stereotypical obsession rings true. At the time this article was written, Anders Breivik was using the platform of his trial to promote his homicidal outlook on multiculturalism. Rupert Murdoch’s News International remained locked in the news over the ever-expanding phone hacking affair. An American sergeant was awaiting trial for the murder of civilians in Afghanistan and the Wikileaks rebel Julian Assange was under threat of extradition to Sweden (where else?) on suspicion of sex crimes.

Lund and Salander operate in a recognisable space. They are compelling due to their mixture of confidence and vulnerability, surpassing skill and emotional isolation. They are not defined by the people around them and are not, as was often the case with female detectives of the past, ‘the story of a woman in a man’s world’. Lund and Salander project an alternative image, be it Lund’s sweaters and jeans or Salander’s leather and tattoos. Both defy easy classification. Both subvert traditional images of women, and women crime fighters in particular. Because of that, they come alive, not as stereotypes but as genuine, interesting and idiosyncratic human beings.

The title of this article references the Hitchcockian thriller What Lies Beneath (Demakis, USA, 2000). The phrase sums up both the focus of Lund and Salander’s investigations – and also defines the question in the minds of audiences when confronted with two of crime fiction’s most fascinating characters.

Jonathan Nunns is Head of Media Studies at Collyer’s College and moderates for the WJEC.

Follow it up

Bitel, Anton: ‘Review of The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo’, Sight and Sound (02/2012)


Newman, Kim: ‘The Ice Girl Cometh’, Sight and Sound (02/2012)


Wise, Damon: ‘Review of The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo’, Empire (02/2012)
Bullet by bullet

The iconography of the Western
With the longest opening sequence in film history, the start of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) is a classic of the Western genre. Through an analysis of the opening sequence, James Rose examines its iconography, its meanings and its wider relationship to the genre.

**Iconography:** The distinguishing elements, in terms of props and visual details, which characterise a genre. Genres are said to be recognisable through their characteristic iconography.

David Probert: *Essential Word Dictionary: AS/A Level Media Studies*

David Probert suggests, in relation to Media Studies at least, that iconography refers to the things that are repeatedly seen over numerous films by numerous directors over time. These elements are so recurrent that their presence begins to define the genre. In effect, they become symbolic moments that, over a period of time and a number of films, begin to generate their own meanings specifically in relation to the genre in which they repeatedly appear.

Probert's definition continues by listing some of the key iconographical elements of the Western genre: desert locations, horses, men in hats and clapboard houses. As detailed in Andrew M. Butler's book *Film Studies*, further iconography can be added to this list: Monument Valley, six-guns, shoot-outs, and horsemanship. Butler's index of Western iconography clearly builds upon Probert's: yet it is interesting to note that, given the considerable depth of the Western genre, both neglect to mention Native American Indians, bows and arrows, wigwams as well as herds of cattle being driven across the Plains, stagecoaches, the saloon and country jail, the Sheriff and the town drunk.

**Once Upon a Time...**

During the very early stages of the film's pre-production, director Leone would sit watching the classic Hollywood Westerns with his two writers, Bernardo Bertolucci and Dario Argento. The three would then discuss the imagery – the very iconography of the genre – in order to create what Christopher Frayling, in his book *Once Upon a Time in Italy*, describes as a 'mosaic of hallowed [Western] moments'. These deeply iconographical 'moments' were united by a very simple story: the coming of the railroad to a vast tract of desert leads to a violent and revenge-fuelled dispute over the rights to the land and the water it holds. By creating his story from the key iconography of the Western, Leone stated that: 'the basic idea ... was to use some of the conventions, devices and settings of the American Western film and a series of references to individual Westerns – to use these things to tell my vision of the story of the birth of a nation ... the project's central theme was to be the arrival of progress on the desert frontier in the form of the transcontinental railroad.'

Leone's comments make clear the deeper value of this iconography: most of the images carry and therefore convey meaning to the audience. So, for example, and as indicated by Leone, the image of the railroad and steam trains are symbols of technological progress, an image of the rigidity and order of the man-made within the chaos of the desert wilderness.

This inherent meaning in the genre's iconography was what interested Leone the most and, throughout *Once Upon a Time in the West*, he either exaggerates the iconography's meaning or, in a playful way, transforms it so that the symbol connotes its very opposite. To explore this approach to iconography, this article will provide a close textual analysis of the opening sequence to *Once Upon a Time in the West* (see overleaf) in order to define what some of these iconic moments mean and how, on occasion, Leone may invert them.

**The gunfighters**

The opening of the film has a stark simplicity to it: three gunfighters arrive at a railway station that appears to be under construction. There they await the arrival of a train – a train which should be carrying the man whom they have been hired to kill. For most directors this sequence would be about the gunslingers’ purpose – to murder their target; but Leone, a director obsessed by vast and grand images, unusual soundscapes and a sly sense of both humour and genre, transforms this basic premise into an eloquent and protracted sequence concerned with only one thing: waiting.

Having entered the railway station and locked the station master in the cupboard, the gunslingers position themselves along the length of the platform. The apparent leader, Snaky (Jack Elam), big, imposing and with a lazy eye, sits on the bench and is annoyed by a fly. He catches it in the barrel of his pistol and, with it held against his forehead, listens to its angry buzzing as he sleeps. The second, a tall and muscular black man, Stony (Woody Strode), stands beneath a dripping girder. The water collects in his wide brimmed hat. When it is full, he slowly takes it off and drinks the water. The third gunslinger, Knuckles (Al Mulock), sits on a water trough and repeatedly cracks his knuckles.

**The image of the gunslinger** is a potent symbol within the Western genre. Regardless of whether they are a force of Good or Evil, the gunslinger is usually represented as a lonely and nomadic figure and one who is capable of extreme and brutal violence. Gunfighters drink whiskey, and are fast and accurate with their gun. In essence a force of aggression, a heightened image of masculinity through their sun-baked skin, narrow eyes and stubble, their belt of bullets and holster on each hip. Leone's gunfighters are a partial archetype in relation to this interpretation. They do indeed appear as the classic iconographical image would portray them – tanned, narrow-eyed and carrying a gun – but their actions undermine their violent potential. Instead of preparing their weapons and themselves for the arrival of their target, the three men amuse themselves to pass the time, swatting flies, drinking water or cracking their knuckles. There is nothing violent about these men; instead they appear bored, unhappy at having to wait even longer for the arrival of their target.

**Intertextual references**

It is worth noting that while the three gunslingers are archetypes, the actors playing them can be interpreted as references Leone makes to the Classic Hollywood Westerns. Jack Elam played a violent gunslinger in over thirty Westerns and, famously, played the town drunk in Fred Zinneman's classic Western *High Noon* (1952) while Woody Strode starred in, amongst other Westerns, John Ford's *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960) and *The Man who Shot Liberty Va lance* (1962) as well as *The Professionals* (Richard Brooks, 1966). These men, in effect, become icons themselves, representing not just the violent gunslinger but also the very filmic heritage Leone references throughout the opening sequence.

**The railroad**

The train's arrival at the station, announced by its short sharp whistle, is first seen in a very low-angle shot, the train hurtling towards and then speeding over the camera. The significance of this
shot is two-fold: the low-angle clearly places the train in a dominant and powerful position, with the angle accentuating its iconographical value as something of powerful technology, of speed and of progress. In contrast to this, the shot also functions as a cinematic reference: Leone and his writers deliberately constructed the script around a series of key images from the classic Hollywood Westerns, in this case an image taken directly from John Ford’s The Iron Horse (1924), the first film to present the railroad in this type of shot. Leone references it not only for its symbolic power but also because of the legacy of Ford’s film; as Frayling suggests in Once Upon a Time in Italy, the shot of the train speeding over the camera ‘became an essential element of visual grammar in Westerns’ since the release of The Iron Horse. The shot is, in essence, a quintessential icon of the Western.

Perhaps of all the iconographical images used in the opening sequence, the most potent is this image of the railroad. The Western is a genre preoccupied with the story of the civilising process, of extending the reach of the civilised into the uncharted territory of the wilderness and, by doing so, taming it. Because of this, the railroad is a potent image that represents civilisation: made of engineered metal, using steam power and cutting straight lines through the chaotic desert, the railroad is emblematic of technological progress, of the man-made, of industry and commerce. It is, for the time period, perhaps the ultimate icon of progress and power, of technology and speed, of communication and of (eventually) connecting one side of the country with the other.

For Frayling, the railroad represented ‘modernity and progress’; he goes on to suggest that the symbolic value of the railroad goes further and deeper, stating that ‘the railroad was a symbol of the new nation itself’, bringing together not only the Americans who had, until recently, fought each other in the Civil War, but also the Irish, Italians and Chinese immigrants who had entered into this ‘new’ country. Frayling’s interpretation positions the railroad as a unifying element, a means by which long-distance travel was made possible, but which also brought together the various ethnic and political factions of the country into a potentially coherent whole. In effect, the railroad helped instigate the birth of America. Such an interpretation is perhaps appropriate for, as already indicated, Leone’s intention for the film was to: present a homage to the Western at the same time as showing the mutations which American society was undergoing at the time... a cinematic fresco of the birth of America.

Guns
The gun, be that a Smith & Wesson, a Colt or Winchester rifle, is perhaps the most dominant piece of iconography in the Western. As a genre ultimately preoccupied with the process of civilising the untamed wilderness of North America, the gun is a potent symbol of white male masculinity through an index of power, control, authority and violence. In the right hands, a Colt revolver can deliver justice and maintain the peace; in the wrong hands it can kill the innocent and bring chaos and violence.

For a sequence that is really a protracted build up to a gunfight, the gunslinger’s weapons are hardly seen. It is only upon the train’s whistle that we really get to see them as Stony loads his rifle while Snaky loosens his revolver in its holster, ready to be drawn. Instead of being symbols of power, these guns imply more a probable violence, a preparation for conflict and possible death. They do not represent power or authority. Instead, Leone reduces them to mere tools, devices by which to get the (violent) job done. It is worth noting that Stony’s rifle is given its own close-up as the train pulls into the station. Leone’s intention for this shot was not to bring attention to the symbolic value of the gun but instead to make a further subtle reference to the classic Hollywood Westerns: Stony’s rifle is sawn-off and has the same trigger guard as the rifle John Wayne used throughout his Westerns, in particular Howard Hawk’s Rio Bravo (1959).

Finally, violence
After all that waiting, their target, a man called Harmonica (Charles Bronson), has arrived. He stands on the opposite side of the rail track to them, symbolically emphasised through both the long and medium shots used in the lead up to the climactic gunfight: in both shots, the track runs parallel to the screen, a thick black line that separates the men and so functions as a divide, a line almost literally drawn in the surrounding sand. With so little information about the characters, it is difficult for the audience to decipher who is on ‘the wrong side of the tracks’ – who actually represents a force of Evil in this film. Either way, he is alive and, in a further iconic image, he mounts one of the horses and rides into the shimmering heat of the untamed wilderness.

Worth a trip to the Library
Frayling, Christopher (2000): Sergio Leone: Something to do with Death
Frayling, Christopher (2005): Sergio Leone: Once Upon a Time in Italy
Butler, Andrew A. (2002): Film Studies

James Rose is a freelance writer and filmmaker and a regular contributor to MediaMagazine.

The codes and conventions of the Western have once again been transformed by Leone – with all four men dead the narrative seems to stop, the iconography literally shot down before the audience. Yet, one of them stirs. Harmonica, wounded but alive, slowly gets up and uses his coat to construct a makeshift sling for his wounded arm. His coat is white; perhaps that should have been enough earlier on to define him as the force of Good in this film. Either way, he is alive and, in a further iconic image, he mounts one of the horses and rides into the shimmering heat of the untamed wilderness.
Icons of Horror in The Cabin in the Woods

Written by the creators of Buffy and Cloverfield, you might think you know what to expect from The Cabin in the Woods. But, as Sean Richardson points out, this is a movie that speaks to universal fears and mythologies ... a must for Film students!

You’ve seen horrible things: an army of nightmare creatures. And they are real. But they are nothing compared to what lies beneath us. There is a greater good, and for that you must be sacrificed.

Joss Whedon, director: The Cabin In The Woods

The Cabin In The Woods is the horror feature film to end all horrors. Its narrative deals with all horrors; Joss Whedon, director of Avengers Assemble, uses The Cabin In The Woods (2011) to decode and deconstruct horror icons that fill all our subconscious nightmares. As a horror aficionado and something of a ‘fanboy’, I was desperate to see how the creator of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Avengers Assemble would play around with the tropes of the horror genre and the iconic villains we have all grown up with.

The full cast of filmic evil is assembled on screen, in a rampage of carnage that almost hurts your eyes in the final act of the feature film.

We begin with the cast of characters familiar from horror films, all of whom we expect to be ritually slaughtered, save one final girl or boy. The opening sequence introduces five college ‘types’, including the archetypal Whore, Athlete, Fool, Scholar and Virgin. Curt (Chris Hemsworth, who plays Thor in Avengers Assemble) is the ‘Athlete’, but not a typical jock; he’s sensitive and smart. His girlfriend Jules (Anna Hutchison) is an attractive and sexually active woman – the archetypal ‘Whore’. Dana (Kristen Connolly) is the smart and innocent, yet ridiculously attractive ‘Virgin’. Marty (Fran Kranz) is the stoner ‘Fool’ and Holden (Jesse Williams), the bookish ‘Scholar’.

The characters leave the city for a weekend at the cabin in the woods, and the traditional ‘backwoods versus city’ Levi-Strauss binary oppositions are set up. Horror films such as Evil Dead or Wrong Turn are referenced, with the dark wild backwoods holding the dual ‘push and pull’ of primal evil versus wild abandon. The twist here, though, is that the five campers are under surveillance by a sinister corporation ...

Audience expectations naturally point to the horrific and suspense-filled butchery of these characters, with the exception of the statutory ‘final survivor’ (probably the ‘Virgin’, a resourceful brunette, chaste, highly intelligent and finding inner heroic reserves). But director Joss Whedon has other ideas for this film, attempting a postmodern deconstruction of horror that works on multiple levels. He sets up a text that illustrates ‘The Villain With a Thousand Faces’, with evil characters from every nightmare you have ever had.

The hero with a thousand faces

Joseph Campbell’s seminal work The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), is a book that all film and media students would benefit from reading. It deals with the archetypal heroes, narratives and ‘types’ that humans have told stories about since time began, based on psychoanalyst Jung’s idea of ‘Archetypes’. Archetypes are constantly repeating...
The horror audience’s ‘need’ for sacrifice

The Cabin in the Woods very cleverly explores ideas about the audiences for genres such as horror. The narrative sets up the idea that an ancient power dwells in the bowels of the Earth, that can only be appeased by an offering of pain and blood. A U.S. corporation must successfully complete the sacrifice, which must conclude with the death of a virgin after the brutal killing/sacrifice of four other people by supernatural forces. As long as this ritual is maintained, the ancient power maintains its slumber, thus allowing humanity to continue. In the film, this sacrifice, using the icons of horror, is represented as a requirement of the ancient gods; but director Joss Whedon makes a powerful link with the need for a virtual sacrifice in a horror ‘film’ to appease our ancient, primal needs as audience.

The film could be saying something about filmmaking itself; the three layers of The Corporation’s base could represent the three levels of filmmaking, as outlined here.

• The college friends in the cabin are the actors, playing out a scenario.
• The Corporation agents in the bunker are the behind-the-scenes crew - directors and producers - inventing that scenario.
• The ancient evils below are we, the audience, enjoying it, needing it.

The ancient power is represented, in Greek mythology, by the Titans, the parents of the ancient Greek gods. According to myth, the Kraken, a Titan, could only be appeased by the blood of Andromeda, the virgin princess. The implication, in the film’s narrative, is that the audience, need the catharsis of virtual characters who occur in the dreams of all people and the myths of all cultures. The characters come from a universal source in the collective unconscious, because they reflect universal concerns.

The Cabin In The Woods contains a sequence where glass cages house horror film nightmare characters, from which Joss Whedon creates what is arguably the ‘Villain with a Thousand Faces’. It draws on the idea of polysemy - that texts and images carry multiple meanings, allowing for many different readings and interpretations. Despite its universality, the concept of ‘evil’ is different for us all, with the many faces of evil on screen.
Icons of horror – the whiteboard

For Media students one of the most satisfying scenes in *The Cabin in the Woods* must be the sequence where ‘The Corporation guy’ sets out the icons of horror that may potentially be unleashed on the unsuspecting Whore, Athlete, Fool, Scholar and Virgin. A whiteboard is shown, listing the incarnations of ‘The Villain With a Thousand Faces’.

A series of nightmare characters are listed – zombies, clowns and Hell Lords, sexy witches, dismemberment goblins, wraiths, twins, vampires and an Appalachian redneck torture family. The chosen iconic villainous antagonists are a vengeful Appalachian redneck torture family from the backwoods (and the subsequent scenes are as much fun as that sounds!).

The final act of the film sees the whole array of icons released onto the screen in what is, literally, a bloodbath. Violence, torture, pain and death ensue in pin-sharp digital projection. Choice is

Scopophilia

The term *Scopophilia* refers to the obsession with ‘looking’ in a voyeuristic way, and is intrinsic to cinema studies and in particular, to the horror genre. This movie actively draws attention to the scopophilia of film.

*Monitors, windows, mirrors and eyes are repeated signifiers* used by the director throughout the film to draw attention to the *spectacle of horror*. In one scene, two characters agonise over whether to take advantage of the voyeuristic thrills offered by a one-way mirror; in another, all five protagonists stare at objects in the cabin’s cellar which will release a specific evil. We cut to close-ups of their eyes, longingly admiring the objects they are holding. The obligatory sex scene deploys a scantily-clad blonde and an alpha male, played by Thor himself! The scopophilic genre pleasures are being ironically used and deconstructed at the same time.
Joss Whedon has accomplished a self-reflexive postmodern deconstruction of the modern horror film that introduces the multiplex horror crowd to the delights of metanarrative and desensitisation theory, but wrapped it in a hugely enjoyable romp through the icons of the genre. Anyone for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*?

Sean Richardson is Head of Media Studies, Penistone Grammar School Advanced Learning Centre.

So much of this movie ends up being about mythology in general, and our pagan nature... When you’re dealing with archetypes you’re dealing with things that have been around forever, and that is very much at the heart of *Cabin in the Woods*, that this isn’t just about horror movies, this is about mythology, and who we are as a people, and what we keep doing to youth, and how that we have this need, as people, to idealise youth, and then marginalise youth, and then destroy youth.

Director and writer Drew Goddard

Follow it up

Trailers: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ENUBUdFswM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ENUBUdFswM)

You think you know the story

The iconography of the Sex Pistols

35 years and two Jubilees on, Mark Ramey investigates the iconoclastic Sex Pistols and their brief but game-changing relationship with the monarchy.

Once upon a time there lived a queen – Elizabeth was her name. This is the story of how she defeated all her enemies and one horrible mob of talentless working class yobs in particular – The Sex Pistols.

We are Elizabethans – the 20th and 21st century sequel to the the Elizabethans of Shakespeare’s day. For some of us – those born after 1951 – that’s all we’ve been for 60 long years. The royal bloodline, which extends back to the Middle Ages, shows few signs of drying up – the royal family now seems a virile and youthful institution, with the photogenic and popular Prince William and Princess Kate newly married and waiting in the wings at Buckingham Palace.

Their wedding in 2011 was a huge PR success.
receiving worldwide media attention and helping to raise further the profile and status of the Royal Family. With an audience average of 26,000,000 across all platforms and channels, the wedding represented the most watched TV programme worldwide in 2011. By the time this article is printed the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, a four-day holiday in June, will no doubt have been a triumph – and the Royal Family will have further endeared themselves to their UK subjects.

Even before the recent Royal Wedding, the monarchy’s status was secure in the UK, at least according to an ICM survey (commissioned by The Guardian in 2011). It found that:

- 63% of those questioned thought the UK would be worse off without the monarchy
- 67% think the monarchy is ‘relevant’ to life in Britain today
- 60% agree that it makes the country more respected around the world.

But protest was muted; it seems the Royals have pulled off a real coup in an era where other glamour families such as Hollywood’s royalty – film stars – have morphed into evanescent celebrities, and postmodern secularism has created distrust for traditional religious and other authority figures.

The Royals, it seems, are still attractive to many of us – their brand remains iconic and their appeal is still romantic. In film terms alone we have seen the recent successes of such UK films as Young Victoria (2009), The Queen (2006), and The King’s Speech (2010) all feeding into a love of nostalgia and aristocracy – replicated on the small screen with the success of ITV’s aristocratic drama, Downton Abbey, now in its 3rd series.

But it was not always so cosy. In another Jubilee year – 1977, the Silver one – UK youth culture spat out a specifically anti-royalist sentiment in the form of the punk band, The Sex Pistols’ second single, ‘God Save the Queen’ (May 1977 – Virgin Records). The lyrics make a fun read, specifically the first 2 verses:

**God save the Queen**
The fascist regime,
They made you a moron
A potential H-bomb.
**God save the Queen**

She ain’t no human being.
There is no future
In England’s dreaming.

They went down a storm – so much so that the Pistols’ second label A&M (their first, EMI, had sacked them in late 1976) destroyed the original March print of 25,000 singles, and sacked the band. 

In April 2011 Record Collector magazine made the A&M vinyl print the world’s most collectible record valued at approximately £8,000.) By May they were working with a then-anti-establishment Richard Branson at Virgin, and the single was heading for No 1 in the charts – selling 150,000 copies within a week and a half of its release.

In 1977 punk had led to a moral panic fuelled in part by its nihilism, aggressive posturing and an infamous high-profile appearance by the Pistols on early evening TV, which descended into farce and on-air swearing. The inquest of the TV chat show lost his job; but by the next morning the UK tabloid press had vilified all punks with such headlines as ‘The Filth and the Fury’ (Daily Mirror), and a full-scale witch-hunt had begun. Clever marketing fuelled the hype and hysteria, culminating in a riotously-staged record-signing outside Buckingham Palace. The royal theme continued when Virgin sailed a cruise ship (aptly named ‘The Queen Elizabeth’) down the Thames with the band playing their new single ‘God Save the Queen’ as they passed the Houses of Parliament. Predictably the police raided the party-boat, and made arrests.

Despite the BBC and the IBA (then responsible for commercial broadcasting in the UK) refusing to play the song, it still reached number one on the NME charts but only made it to number two on the official UK Singles Chart as used by the BBC. This led to accusations that the charts had been fixed to prevent the song from reaching number one. Rod Stewart got the official nod on the official UK Singles Chart as used by the BBC. This led to accusations that the charts had been fixed to prevent the song from reaching number one. Rod Stewart got the official nod with his establishment-blessed single – aptly named, ‘I don’t want to talk about it.’

The Sex Pistols were iconoclasts and drew other iconoclasts to them – including Jamie Reid, a graphic artist. Reid in particular established the most powerful image of the movement with his design for the cover art of their single ‘God Save the Queen’.

Reid used an image of the Queen torn from The Sunday People and added the band’s name and song title in ‘ransom style’ cut-and-paste fonts across Her Majesty’s eyes and mouth. He created the image out of hundreds of possible designs, including the infamous image of the Queen with swastika eyes and safety-pin-pierced lips. Both images caused national indignation.
The band's only album, *Never Mind the Bollocks* (October 1977, Virgin), met with similar controversy on its release due to its use of the swearword 'bollocks'. A court case ensued and the band won the right to use the term. The album went on to make platinum sales of over a million copies.

Looking back to 1977 it is hard to appreciate the fuss the Pistols caused. But if we do look back at punk and the reaction it provoked at the time, we can learn a lot about ourselves, now.

**The origins of punk**

Punk arose from dissatisfaction with a musical culture dominated by an overtly florid and fantasy-obsessed rock music – *Progressive Rock* – and a seemingly corporate and supine *Disco*. This music just didn't reflect the punks’ world or their attitude towards it. It was not angry: anger developed out of working-class urban disenchantment during a national recession. Finally punk emerged from an avant-garde counter-culture – typified by the Warhol protégés, New York art rockers, such as *Velvet Underground*. The mad mix these forces threw up gave UK punk its distinctive character, moulded to a considerable degree by the Sex Pistols’ impresario, Malcolm McLaren and his fashion-designer wife Vivienne Westwood.

The rise of right-wing politics in the late 70s and the subsequent ideological conflicts it lead to also helped clarify punk’s largely anti-establishment politics.

But punk has now been appropriated by the consumer culture it at least pretended to reject. Punk has become a fashion-poseur stereotype – pink Mohicans and leather jackets – a symbol of UK culture much loved by tourists and available off the rack as mass-produced merchandise in the markets of Camden Town and Carnaby Street. Musically the genre has developed from its 3-chord aesthetic into a variety of hybrids – pop punk for example. The maverick personalities that fuelled the revolt have now become middle-aged celebrities cashing in on their notoriety – John Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten’s endorsement of *Country Life* butter in a series of TV adverts (2008) being perhaps the most extreme – and derided – example. Jamie Reid’s artwork now adorns middle-class homes, and ripped jeans are more catwalk than anti-fashion. Politically the punk movement was always diverse; and the Pistols were never ‘political’ in the same way as the politically-informed and left-leaning *Clash*.

Punk arose, according to Jon Savage’s seminal work, *England’s Dreaming*, as an international outsider aesthetic: dark, tribal, alienated, alien, full of black humour.

Punk is now, it seems, based on an aesthetic of consumption, a post-modern lifestyle choice, as ideologically empty as a microwave dinner.

What is clear is that now there is no youth subculture with the power to shake the establishment as UK punk rock did in 1977; and that, as the Diamond Jubilee’s festivities have shown, there is little appetite to attack the monarchy. The irony is that it was punk, not the monarchy, which had ‘no future’. The Queen, it seems, has defeated the uprising, and England is still dreaming.

On 16th April 2012 the *NME* revealed online that the Sex Pistols were re-releasing their single ‘the alternative national anthem’ God Save the Queen on May 27th – almost 35 years to the day after the original release. There was also a fan-led Facebook campaign to get justice for the Pistols and get the single to number one in the charts. Some critics have suggested that this is merely a PR campaign to boost sales but other commentators feel that the song’s refrain of ‘no future’ will still connect with a young audience experiencing economic and social conditions similar to those of the 1970s.

In 2010, the song was among the top 10 most controversial songs of all time. Sadly, the 2012 re-release reached a chart position of 80.

Mark Ramey teaches Media Studies at Collyer’s College, West Sussex.

---

www.jamiereid.org
www.republic.org.uk
www.democraticrepublicanparty.co.uk
www.thediamondjubilee.org
www.royal.gov.uk
www.sexpistolsofficial.com
www.sex-pistols.net


*The Great Rock and Roll Swindle* (1980)

Kubrick fan Will Rimmer reflects on the signature style of the controversial auteur, and identifies eight images which demonstrate the iconic power of his visual style.

There is something alluring, yet dangerous, when it comes to decoding the work of auteur filmmaker Stanley Kubrick. Dangerous due to the relationship the spectator must ultimately enter into with the director, once the film has started. After that, there is no turning back: the master manipulator of audience expectations and emotions is now in control. Stanley Kubrick’s body of work has been expertly picked over during his illustrious career, particularly since his untimely death aged 70 in March 1999, just days after the completion of his final film – the psychological thriller *Eyes Wide Shut*. Within each of his films, Kubrick created a range of amazing shots, which have become legendary in film circles. Contemporary filmmakers, critics and audiences continue to pore over these images in an almost forensic fashion, such is the density and illusory richness of the shots.

What follows is a range of shots which are seared into the brain of this particular ‘Kubrickophile’. As always, ambiguity is embedded deeply into his work; perhaps half of the pleasure of his work is the challenge of decoding what the hidden subtext actually means. There is never, ever, one simple preferred reading, only an educated guess at what his mischievous intentions may have been. And that’s the beauty of it all. Here, then, are some of the most iconic images ever committed to film.

**Paths of Glory**

Set in the killing fields of France during World War One, Kubrick’s film *Paths of Glory* (banned in France for over 20 years) highlighted both the madness and futility of war, as army generals force foot soldiers to go over the top and head towards certain death. Any soldiers unwilling to follow orders face execution. The scene of General George Broulard telling Colonel Dax that: ‘His men have skimmed milk in their veins instead of blood;’ is a fascinating verbal battle between ignorant leaders who don’t seem to care about their own subordinate grunts in the field, and a colonel who is caught between supporting both the men in his own regiment, yet equally having to please superiors who hold him personally accountable for their ‘cowardice.’ Dax’s response – ‘Well it’s the reddest milk I’ve ever seen’ – falls on deaf ears.

As pivotal as this scene is, the subsequent shot of Dax marching through the trenches eyeballing his men, clearly terrified by the impending bloodbath, resonates even more. The forward and reverse tracking shot used by Kubrick was to become a staple technique of his approach to camera movement. When discussing this scene in the superb documentary *Stanley Kubrick – A Life In Pictures* it is clear Martin Scorsese acutely understood the effect of this technique:

> What made it even more shocking was the nature in which it was shot. Think about the use of the tracking camera in the trenches.

There is something about an objective vision that is happening. They’re trying to be objective. Look here, I am just showing you this man (Colonel Dax) so you make up your own mind. I am telling you right now, it was bad. It’s a lie. It’s hypocrisy.

**Lolita**

Kubrick crystallised the way a tracking camera can provide both subjective and objective points of view, drawing the viewer directly into the trenches. There is no escape. Based on the bestselling novel by Vladimir Nabokov, Kubrick followed up swords-and-sandals epic *Spartacus* by moving to England (on a permanent basis) to make a film, *Lolita*, which would have the censors of the time jumping up and down like jack rabbits. In the context of the time, it is easy to see why. Kubrick’s take on Nabokov’s tale of the sexually-charged relationship between college professor Humbert Humbert and the precocious teen daughter of his new lady friend Charlotte Haze would, ultimately, be toned down to gain a cinema release. Yet there was one stand-out scene which did make the final cut.
and his ‘droogs’ are relaxing in the haven of the Korova milk bar, the locale in which they ‘sharpen up for a bit of the old ultra-violence.’

The shot begins, unusually, with a close-up on the face of our anti-hero protagonist, Alex, and slowly pulls out to reveal the interior setting, and the formally dressed characters that inhabit the space around him.

His facial expression appears transfixed; his look engages us directly. Kubrick provides no cutaway, no change of camera angle. Alex (and thus, by extension, Kubrick himself) has the audience in the palm of his hand. Head down, but with his eyes looking up, Alex’s gaze is seared frighteningly into the mind of the viewer.

Finally, the reverse tracking shot moves away slowly, thankfully sparing us the trauma of looking directly into Alex’s eyes. Through a long take, we see the surroundings: strange artwork adorns the walls, and phallic-shaped imagery is omnipresent. If Kubrick’s intention for the opening shot was to unsettle his audience, then he achieved his aim with ease.

Barry Lyndon
If any Kubrick film could be argued to favour style over substance, then it would be Barry Lyndon. The film wowed the European critics, but left both the American critics and the viewing public underwhelmed, failing to sparkle at the box office. At nearly three hours it may be overlong, yet the images are undeniably gorgeous. Kubrick’s photography background is evident in this film; his approach to mise-en-cadre (the framing of a single shot) displays a rare talent for framing and composition. Pictorially, the images link together effectively to create one long, moving-image ‘painting.’

‘This is reinforced by Kubrick’s stubbornly

2001: A Space Odyssey

Kubrick’s first foray into science fiction left his imprint on the genre with an array of stunning shots which filmmakers for decades to come would seek to emulate, yet fail to surpass. The most memorable image of the film is probably the bone shot, in the ‘dawn of man’ story vignette. Indeed, the opening 25 minutes of the film are entirely wordless, with visual images used underline the narrative drive of the film.

Kubrick uses an editing technique known as a matchcut to switch the story from the era of pre-historic man to a spaceship floating in near earth orbit.

A Clockwork Orange

The opening shot to Kubrick’s controversial (a theme is developing here) adaptation of Anthony Burgess’ cult classic novel A Clockwork Orange is worth analysing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it sets the kind of discordant tone the film will follow. teenage gang leader Alex De Large

Again, the scene showcases Kubrick’s ability to convey meaning through image rather than dialogue. Humbert’s constant glances towards a picture of Lolita on the bedside stand, while engaged in a passionate embrace with her mother, leave the audience in no doubt what is in his mind. He imagines making love to Lolita. The shot is provocative, yet subtly and economically conveys tone, mood and atmosphere.

When the ape throws the bone into the air, the cut to the similarly-shaped spaceship, shows how a director’s clever manipulation of time/space relations can guide, rather than confuse, the spectator. Kubrick eschewed the use of an onscreen title card here, and the shot is all the better for it. It is a classic Kubrick shot, and remains one of his most celebrated images.
iconoclastic approach to film lighting: for him, only candlelight could provide the visual authenticity of life in 18th-century Britain. Of course, thanks to some ingenious changes to the film cameras used on the shoot, and painstaking lighting set-ups with candles, Kubrick was able to pull off the exact look he wanted in order to tell his story.

Though many scenes of gambling and characters slowly pacing the exterior grounds of large country houses are beautifully composed, perhaps the most interesting image of the film is the seduction scene where Barry Lyndon embraces his object of desire, Lady Lyndon. Once more, dialogue is discarded, as image and non-diegetic music function to illustrate the genesis of their long, but ultimately doomed, relationship.

Lady Lyndon has left the gambling tables, and is now outside, alone, and rather isolated. Barry Lyndon follows her, but the walk he makes, as befits the movements and gestures of the time period, is agonisingly slow. Kubrick’s camera tracks him equally slowly, with Leonard Rosenman’s musical score encouraging the spectator to will the man and woman together in a powerful union. Finally, Barry reaches her, and stealthily takes her hand. Flirting over, his object of desire succumbs to the charms of this handsome Irish rogue, and they kiss passionately. Kubrick demonstrates that images, more than words, can communicate a range of meanings with the power to lock in the audience.

The Shining

As highlighted earlier, ambiguity is central to Kubrick’s approach to storytelling, and if there is one standout image from The Shining – again, almost impossible to select from the film as a whole – then it is the final shot of the film. Appropriately enough, the director’s photographic origins are in evidence, as the camera does a slow zoom in on a photograph from a party dated July 4th, 1921 in The Overlook hotel, situated in the mountains of Colorado. Jack Nicholson, who plays Jack Torrance, the caretaker of the hotel, smartly described Kubrick’s fascination in still images as thus:

One of the things that he said to me that I always remember was that in movies, you don’t try and photograph the reality, you try and photograph the photograph of the reality.

For the past two hours, we have watched the main protagonist Jack Torrance in contemporary Colorado go from caring husband and doting father to his infant son Danny – the boy who possesses ‘the shining’ – to the epitome of evil. Yet here he is, photographed in a party from 1921. How is this possible? Is he a ghost? Is he already dead? Riddles and ambiguities permeate Kubrick’s work to such an extent that repeated viewings leave us with more questions than answers.

The image is undoubtedly polysemic in nature, inviting a range of multiple meanings.

Mainstream Hollywood films may find such an approach unfeasible, (thanks to the safety first policy of studio executives) but for a powerful industry figure like Kubrick, the opportunity to play with both genre, narrative and audience expectations, was simply too good to pass up. After the relative ‘failure’ of Barry Lyndon (although it did win four Oscars), The Shining was both a commercial and critical hit. The Kubrick/Nicholson combination, based on the novel by horror master Stephen King, ensured Kubrick’s reputation was as strong as ever.

Full Metal Jacket

Based on Gustav Hasford’s account of his time as a correspondent covering the Vietnam war, Kubrick returned to the war genre to make Full Metal Jacket, this time, in his own words:
---

**Eyes Wide Shut**

*Eyes Wide Shut*, like all previous Kubrick efforts, both confused and dumbfounded critics and audiences in equal measure. Yet when looking deeper in this so called *psycho-sexual mystery thriller*, it becomes clear it slots neatly into Kubrick's body of work, as the requisite camera techniques, colour motifs (red and blue connote several interpretative meanings within the narrative) and reoccurring thematic concerns all converge in a foreboding manner. The circular tracking shot of Dr Bill Harford being forced to unmask and ‘show’ himself to the participants of the illuminati-style secret society ritual he infiltrated, illustrates Kubrickian mise-en-scène at its most seductive. The ritualised behaviour plays with notions of spectacle and theatricality to demonstrate visually just how much danger Dr Bill is now in. With his face (and now, presumably, his identity) revealed to the masked spectators, they converge to create a sense of physical and emotional dread within him, as the unseen people hover ominously around Dr Bill, forming a circle of entrapment which he cannot escape. Just like the protagonists in earlier Kubrick films, there is no chance of escape.

Dr Bill Harford should not have been privy to such a private spectacle of the world’s most important movers and shakers – in which it appears sexual gratification is the reward for being a powerful person – and as a result he is literally the man who knows too much. The scene is effectively wordless, letting Kubrick’s images do the rest, and the reveal shot sets in motion a chain reaction of events which ensures Dr Bill’s life will never be the same again.

---

**Conclusion**

It is almost impossible to cherry pick images from Kubrick’s films and say with any degree of certainty which is the best. There are too many to choose from, such is the richness of the material available. As a true auteur filmmaker, Kubrick consistently emerges in top ten lists of the greatest film directors of all time. After studying his personal style which focuses on the visual aspects of cinema, it is not hard to see why.

*Will Rimmer teaches Media at Knowsley College.*

---

Image 8) Eyes Wide Shut The reveal shot of Dr Bill Harford at the mansion

---

Not a war movie, like *Paths of Glory*. Instead an anti-war movie.’

Whatever Kubrick’s true intentions in terms of anti-war rhetoric and political ideology, the resulting film added a plethora of standout shots to his catalogue of stunning imagery. The turning point of the film, which ends the first act of the narrative arc, sees young, raw military recruits go from naivety to being well-drilled, well-trained soldiers ready to fight in the killing fields of Vietnam. The de-humanising effects of such cold, almost nihilistic training methods on the young recruits does create casualties. All this before the men leave the relative safe haven of the Parris Island training base.

The scene in question sees Private ‘Gomer Pyle’ finally pushed over the edge both physically and, fatally, mentally. The psychological trauma within him is so great, so deep, that he sits in the spotlessly clean barracks toilets alone. He is contemplating suicide. He is brandishing the very weapon he has been trained to use, not against the as-yet-unseen enemy, but disturbingly against himself and the unfortunate Private Joker, who on night watch patrol, walks in on Pyle. Joker tries and fails to convince him to put down the weapon.

The Kubrick signature shot – the low-angle head-up direct stare of the male protagonist – again comes to the fore. Mirroring the shot of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and Jack Torrance in *The Shining*, this image can only connote one thing: something very bad is on the horizon! With Pyle’s stare directly into the camera (which challenges the laws of cinema’s ‘fourth wall’), Kubrick makes an intertextual connection with audience members who recognise this visual motif as something essentially ‘Kubrickian’.

It is akin to the famous Hitchcock cameo, or Spielberg’s use of shooting stars in the night sky. Or even the use of doves in the films of John Woo.

---


---

Image 7) Full Metal Jacket Private Pyle contemplates suicide
The Apple and the Icon
Broadcast journalism student Tara Cox explores the iconic status of Apple Inc., and the work of its distinguished co-creator, Steve Jobs.

**Iconic brands** are defined as having aspects that contribute to consumers' self-expression and personal identity. Brands whose value to consumers comes primarily from having identity value are said to be ‘identity brands’. Some of these brands have such a strong identity that they become more or less cultural icons which makes them ‘iconic brands’. Examples are: Apple, Nike and Harley Davidson. Many iconic brands include almost ritual-like behaviour in purchasing or consuming the products.

Wikipedia

The late Steve Jobs is regarded as an icon for the work he produced, and in his own right. The American inventor (but best known as co-founder, chairman and CEO of Apple Inc.) was widely recognised and praised in the media world for his outstanding contribution to the world of hardware and software, and referred to as a ‘charismatic pioneer of the personal computer revolution’ by the Inventor of the Week Archive in 2011.

So what makes the Apple brand iconic in itself? The distinctive, somewhat Warholesque pop art logo is recognised all over the world. ‘Simplicity is the Ultimate Sophistication’ read the headline on the first Apple II brochure, which captured Apple's philosophy perfectly, and still does today. Apple, of course, is the classic emotional brand. It’s not just intimate with its customers, it is loved.

**Birth of an icon**

Created by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne, Apple Inc. first said hello to the world on April 1st 1976. However, the company’s potential was not fully realised until the late 1990s when in 1998 they released the iMac, an all-in-one computer with its own distinct technology and design. This distinctive design, and its related software, would become the technology treasured by many people, particularly those working in the media, design and creative industries. Iconic moves in journalism and the media industry followed: in 1999, we saw the emergence of Apple onto the digital video editing market with the release of iMovie and Final Cut Pro, which has gone on to be a significant video editing leader in the media industry.

In July 2008, Apple made one of its most significant and renowned decisions and launched the App Store, which aimed to sell third-party applications for the iPhone and iPod Touch. Apps sold here were to become daily features, applications for the iPhone and iPod Touch. The App Store was to become daily features, applications for the iPhone and iPod Touch.

Steve Jobs joined the app rush by creating their own.

The iPhone’s lasting effect will likely be awakening the telecom industry from its torpor.

It is all these distinctive inventions which not only make Apple Inc. one of the most popular, well-loved and iconic companies, but ensure that its figurehead, co-founder Steve Jobs, also achieves the status of icon. It’s evident Jobs had a huge effect on the computing world, but what about the media industry, and especially journalism?

**Iconic impact**

Apple comes across as distinctly humanist; its founding philosophy was ‘power to the people through technology’, and it remains committed to changing education for the better through its software.

If ‘power to the people’ is Apple’s philosophy, it is echoed in its nurturing of Citizen Journalism; the process whereby anyone, anywhere in the world, can write, upload, share and publish stories. As a result of the evolution in smartphones, news audiences are becoming more digital and journalistic themselves. In times of crisis such as the 7/7 London bombings, software users feel more inclined to contribute, and the distinctive, easy to use and revolutionary software offered by Apple allows users to do so. As a result of Steve Jobs’ imaginative creations and Apple’s software, apps and smartphones created a whole new idea of on-the-spot journalism, enabling journalists to research, report and upload stories and data at a pace never before available.

**Iconic values**

The company has established a heartfelt to changing education for the better through its technology. Gobe adds: it’s like having a good friend. That’s what’s interesting about this brand. Somewhere they have created this really humanistic, beyond-business relationship with users and created a cult-like relationship with their brand. It’s a big tribe, everyone is one of them. You’re part of the brand.

This is what users of Apple love most: a feeling that as a customer you’re part of something exciting and technology-driven, and that their creations are designed with you at the forefront. Apple’s software is centred around people; ensuring they get a distinct experience they will long remember.

**Design is a funny word. Some people think design means how it looks. But of course, if you dig deeper, it’s really how it works.**

Steve Jobs

Apple’s apps, available exclusively though the App Store are revolutionising media production and the journalism industry.

**Revolutions and re-inventions**

Examples of apps like this include Byword, a text editor for iPhone/iPad that enables both html functioning and syncs with Dropbox and iCloud. This enables journalists to send copy to editors or managers without being in a newsroom, and to also blog or report on the move.

Another app for journalists and interviews is SkyRecorder which records voice calls to your iPhone or iPad at excellent sound quality, again encouraging there-and-then journalism as opposed to being constrained to a newsroom.

Software app Viddy shares 15-second clips instantly via social networking or blogging and has been compared to ‘Instagram for video’, meaning journalists can edit videos quickly and share these instantly; a perfect tool for reporting news to a tight deadline.

Google Latitude adds locations to news stories and Kooba Shortcut is an image recognition app which finds PDF files of news articles from a single photograph by searching 79 different UK newspaper titles.

Blogsy is a blogging solution for iPad users and Flipboard is a social magazine app which helps journalists follow certain stories and hunt for story leads.

Tweetbot also encourages investigative reporting out of the newsroom by allowing users to search and follow various keyword lists for stories simultaneously. By sweeping a tweet to the right on a smartphone, you can see the full twitter conversation on a topic. Double tapping on a tweet or link shows users more details and tapping and holding a tweet gives you options to share it via social media or blogging.

Software apps such as these are completely changing the way journalists work. Apple’s iPhone and the iPad combined with apps such as Postcards, mean reporters now do not even have to enter the newsroom. They can research a story on their tablet, conduct interviews and write the story up at the scene of a news story. Reporters can email their work to their editor instantly.

The same process can be applied to TV journalists, who can use Viddy to edit footage from the scene and upload this as a breaking news story.
### A timeline of iconic products (from Wikipedia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Macintosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>iMac and PowerBook G3 (he also used ‘one more thing’ to announce Apple’s return to profitability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>iBook, QuickTime TV and AirPort wireless service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Mac OS X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>iPod and iBook G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Xcode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>iPod mini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Mac mini, iPod shuffle and iPod nano. The transition from PowerPC to Intel Processors was announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>The first Intel-based Apple computer, the iMac Core Duo and the MacBook Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Apple TV, iPhone, iPod touch, and iPod classic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>MacBook Air, iPhone 3G, and second generation aluminium 13’ MacBook and 15’ MacBook Pro notebooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>iPhone 3GS, iPod touch 3rd generation, the 5th generation iPod nano, and multicoloured iPod shuffles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>iPad, iPhone 4, and revised versions of iPod shuffle 4th generation, iPod nano 6th generation, iPod touch 4th generation, Apple TV 2nd generation (as ‘one more hobby’) and MacBook Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>iPad 2, Mac OS X Lion, iOS 5, iCloud, iPhone 4S, iPod Touch in white with iOS5 and iPod Nano with a software update to version 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
news story to a website, or email it to their editor back at the news desk.

Steve Jobs’ impact on the news industry thus theoretically could mean a newsroom is no longer needed at all, and certainly means it is used far less. It is immense changes such as this, which make Apple one of the most iconic and appreciated brands of all time.

**The new devices and apps will do for digital what the codex format did for the book. They will deliver a more convenient consumer experience, which will make them the medium of choice for the next generation of Shakespeares or Spielbergs.**

Parry, R. 2011

Apple is now firmly established as a leading competitor in the software battle. It is also now the world’s most profitable maker of phones, and with the iPad, has created a whole new category of computer, heavier and larger than a mobile smartphone, but smaller and more portable than a laptop or desktop computer. This new level of mobility offers fresh reporting, blogging, photo and writing opportunities that were not previously attainable – reinforcing the fact that Jobs’ and Apple’s work has always been primarily ‘for the people’.

**Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn’t matter to me. Going to bed at night saying we’ve done something wonderful… that’s what matters to me.**

Steve Jobs, 1993

**Jobs has 313 patents to his name,** which range from the Apple III to the iPod’s acrylic packaging. Almost all of them are notable and iconic; his creative abilities were undoubtedly legendary. Jobs indeed came a long way since founding Apple Inc. in his garage. He may no longer be with us to run his iconic and immensely profitable company but it is important to remember that his design, opinion, ideas and products still live on, especially in the friends and co-workers he left behind. I, for one, hope the iconic white apple doesn’t fall far from the Steve Jobs-style tree.
SEPTEMBER 2012: IMAGES & ICONS

FEMINIST ICONS OF NORDIC NOIR

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ALBUM COVER

STEVE JOBS AND THE ICONIC APPLE

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE WESTERN

SELF-IMAGE AND THE MEDIA

ICONS IN THE HOOD